

“THERE’S A MAN WITH A GUN OVER THERE”:

COPS AND THE COUNTERCULTURE

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By 1960, television advertisers recognized the economic potential of American youth, and producers were expected to develop programs to attract them, while still maintaining appeal for the older audience members. This task was to prove difficult as the decade wore on. While continuing to link the nation's cold war concerns to the portrayal of good and evil, some shows, like *77 Sunset Strip*, and *The Mod Squad*, explored alternative lifestyles, but still accepted American values. As the 1960s developed, crime programs continued to promote American hegemony but became increasingly more open to alternative reading strategies. This study examines the strategies developed to draw a youth audience to 1960s crime programs, while also supporting the dominant ideology of American society.

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## CHAPTER 1

“THERE’S A MAN WITH A GUN OVER THERE”:

### COPS AND THE COUNTERCULTURE

There’s something happening here  
What it is ain’t exactly clear  
There’s a man with a gun over there  
Telling me I got to beware  
I think it’s time we stop, children, what’s that sound  
Everybody look what’s going down  
—Stephen Stills, “For What It’s Worth”

On a personal level, the first year of the sixties saw my best friend and me successfully lobbying our seventh grade classmates to vote for Kennedy in an election day straw poll at our school. Like many people, we believed “that America was entering a decade of intellectual, political, and economic progress.” (Morrison & Morrison, 1987, p. xviii) However, toward the end of the decade, like many of my contemporaries, I could agreed with the sentiments expressed in Stills’s (1966) song, that “there’s something happening here, what it is ain’t exactly clear.” By the end of the 1960s, the United States was involved in an unpopular war in Vietnam; riots, motivated by racial inequality and the assassination of liberal political leaders, had occurred in many cities; and college campuses had become the focal point for student demonstrations. It is no wonder that many people could not understand what was “happening here.” To complicate the situation, American young people—the most affluent

generation in American history, at least in terms of their discretionary spending potential—were rejecting the source of their affluence and questioning America’s consumer culture.

Like the first generation that grew-up watching television, the medium was also undergoing internal evaluations. The producers of television programs strove to achieve the dual and often conflicting goals of providing programs that could attract the potentially lucrative youth audience for advertisers and still produce texts that would promote the dominate ideology of their mainstream viewer. This was an even more difficult task for producers of crime (police, detective, and spy) shows, because many young people saw the hero of these programs, in the words of Stephen Stills (1966), as “a man with a gun over there, telling me I got to beware.” In other words, much of the veneer surrounding the narrative of most television productions was stripped away in these programs, and the youth market saw that the heroes’ goal in these shows was to “protect and serve” many of institutions that they had come to question.

It is the purpose of this study to examine the authority/rebellion relationship between the crime programs of the 1960s and their viewers who made up the growing youth subculture. In the process, various narrative techniques and formats used by the producers of 1960s crime shows to gain access to the youth market are examined. In addition, the texts of these programs will also be examined to learn whether they demonstrated a willingness to provide messages in support of the dominant ideology. This



study has also examines a number of alternative reading methods that members of the subculture could have applied in negotiating the crime show texts.

Before proceeding, however, it is necessary to mention one limitation of television in general, one that is even more pronounced in times of turbulent social tensions. Fiske (1987) asserts:

It is wrong to see it [television] as an originator of social change, or even to claim that it ought to be so, for social change must have its roots in material social existence; television can be, must be, part of that change, and effectively will either hasten or delay it. (p. 45)

Just as Fiske (1987) chose to warn of the limitations of television as an instigator of social change, from the outset it is necessary to emphasize that television, and especially the police/detective, crime, genre in the 1960s, was not an instrument of social change. Having acknowledged that, a second portion of Fiske's statement has interesting applications for the study of crime programs in the 1960s; did the genre "hasten or delay" social change through the images and text it presented its viewers? It is easy to make an argument for delay; in fact, one constant theme of this study is that the genre served to promote and maintain society's institutions of authority and as such could naturally be expected to oppose social change that might disrupt the status quo. Further, many young people of the 1960s saw television as contributing to the problems facing American society. Spigel and Curtin (1997), acknowledged this sentiment, when they asserted in their book concerning television in the

1960s, that television was “a medium of hopeless consensus, aimed at the white majority and suited only to reproducing the lackluster shop-a-day world of happy homebodies” (p. 1). Yet, given that these same young people were emerging as one of the most desirable demographic groups for these programs, and ultimately their advertisers, it is easy to envision the potential for conflicting goals among those who produced television programs. Therefore, it is possible that messages encouraging social change could find their way into the texts of the program. It is the purpose of this study to examine both these messages and their reception by members of the newly forming youth subculture as the industry attempted to reconcile these conflicting goals.

This type of examination emphasizes a textual analysis of the programs, and as such, these programs must be placed within the context of their time. Although the 1960s has come to represent a period of social change and tumultuous reaction to that change, much of what is referred to as “the sixties” occurred in the last third of the decade. In other words, there was a vast difference between the social attitudes at the beginning of the decade and at the end. Therefore, like all good stories, this decade has a beginning, a middle, and an end, and in this case, a preface—the 1950s. This study will examine the programs and the social currents of the decade in that order.

It is also necessary to acknowledge that social change during the 1960s came to mean different things to different people. During this period many opposing, yet interrelated, political factions—the civil rights movements, the

free speech movement, the free love movement, the anti-war movement, the back to nature movement, the ecology movement, the women's movement—were competing for attention. Further, within this amalgamated group that came to be known as the “youth” movement, were some who were concerned only with lifestyle issues. In fact, although many young people adopted certain styles, such as longer hair and brighter fashion, which were associated with an alternative lifestyle, still for the majority of the decade most of these same youth did not share the same political/economic perspective. Therefore, in examining the counter culture, or the youth subculture, of the 1960s, it is necessary to differentiate between the demand for political and economic alternatives and the demand for social and lifestyle changes. Although these two aspects were linked by many people during the 1960s, the television industry found that they could be pried apart in program texts to present elements that might speak to one aspect of popular concerns and ignore others and at the same time promote institutions of authority.

Further, as Stern and Stern (1990) point out, there was opposition to both the social and lifestyle changes advanced by the subculture in American society. In the early 1970s, then-President Richard Nixon was somewhat successful in unifying this opposition into what his camp termed “the silent majority”—a dubious delineation, because, at the time, polls showed that a majority of the country, including many members of this “silent majority,” were against the Vietnam War, a position which was embraced by the youth

subculture. One of the questions this study has attempted to address is how television's portrayal of detective/police fiction set the environment that allowed the development of this new hegemonic consensus.

In addition to the above considerations, this study addressed the following questions:

1. How did the genre aid in the establishment of a cultural consensus during the 1960s, and how was the viewer reinforced into feeling a "sense of cultural membership?" (Fiske & Hartley, 1978, p. 88).
2. Can the format used in the production of crime shows be deconstructed in order to provide a new meaning?
3. What is the effect of alternative reading devices on the preferred meaning of the text?
4. What social attitudes were reinforced in crime programs in the 1960s?
5. How did these representations provide pleasure to American television viewers?
6. How did the genre respond to changing social and cultural pressures in the 1960s?
7. Did the crime show, police/detective genre engage the social concerns of the 1960s?

The remainder of this chapter concentrates on a brief examination of the detective/police, crime genre as it developed within the literary tradition and as

it has come to be depicted on television. The last section focuses on the methodology used to determine meaning within texts of the programs to be examined and concludes with a brief explanation of why certain programs were chosen for examination. However, before reviewing the literature surrounding television crime drama, it is necessary to determine the relationship of the 1960s youth subculture with the media.

### The Subculture and the Media

Stern and Stern (1990) link the euphoric beginning of the decade to the changes in lifestyle and the development of the subculture that came to be commonly identified with the 1960s. They stated:

Original lifestyle blossomed because the sixties were obsessed by the idea that the time had come to start fresh. The decade arrived like a shaken-up bottle of champagne: full of fizz and ready to gush as soon as someone popped the cork. “The torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans,” John F. Kennedy said in his inaugural address; and we took him at his word. The word was becoming ours; it was a privilege and a duty--and it was fun--to feel part of a pioneering generation. (p. 5)

Not only did the authors point out that the decade offered the possibility of a fresh start toward redefining American society, but they noted that this effort “was fun.” This effect should not be minimized, especially when considering the development of alternative lifestyles, as opposed to political attitudes,

which came to be categorized as the “youth movement,” “the counterculture,” or simply, “the subculture.” Although alternative lifestyles and political activism were commonly linked, they were not part of the same process and each represents a different set of social forces. Although many political activists entered into the youth subculture, others did not, and although many young people adopted the signs and attitudes associated with the new subculture, most did not embrace political activism, preferring to demonstrate their dissatisfaction with American culture through their adoption of alternative styles.

Hebdige (1991) offers a context through which the political and counter-cultural movements of the 1960s can be placed within the fabric of American culture in general. The working definition of culture from which Hebdige initially operated was provided by R. Williams (1965), who defines culture as a “particular way of life which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning, but also in institutions and ordinary behavior” (as cited in Hebdige, 1979, p. 6). From this basic definition, Hebdige expanded culture to “cover all those expressive forms which give meaningful shape to group experience” (p. 136).

Hebdige (1979), like R. Williams (1965), approaches his analysis from a Marxist or neo-Marxist perspective and subscribes to Gramsci's notion of hegemony, which recognizes that the dominant ideology—the communication of the world view of society's ruling class—lies beneath individual

consciousness—and becomes common sense. But opposition to the dominant ideology can enter everyday life. One avenue through which this opposition can enter is through viewer negotiation of television programs. This process is critical to the present study, and Hall (1980) provides an analysis of it, that is examined later. However, issues of style were also important in this evaluation, because it is through style that a subculture can express its opposition to the dominant ideology, and is through the appropriation of those elements of style that television can lure the members of the subculture to their programs.

Hebdige (1991) explains this process by linking stylistic elements to the commodities that bring about the affectations are produced as a result of the adoption of those same stylistic elements. He notes that “commodities can be symbolically ‘reposed’ in everyday life, and endowed with implicitly oppositional meanings, by the very groups who originally produced them” (pp. 16-17). It is in this area of rearranging the meaning of cultural commodities that subcultures have their greatest impact. These subcultures do not directly challenge hegemony; rather, the challenge is expressed through the style that the members of these subcultures obliquely express. This becomes a conflict for the possession of signs that extends to even the most mundane areas of everyday life, between the dominant culture and the subcultures.

Hebdige (1991) describes the relationship between society and the subculture in terms of *noise*. The subculture makes merely background sounds that interfere with the normal discourses produced by the hegemonic structures

in society; the more significant the subculture becomes the more this noise increases. However, for Hebdige, the term *noise* is more than a simple metaphor. Because the subculture both provides discourse and conveys meaning through its appropriation of the commodities of style, the noise of subculture becomes real and results in questioning how the world is defined. It is here that subcultures develop power, the “power to provide and disturb.” The more the subculture gains acceptance and membership, the greater the threat for the hegemonic consensus.

The media responds to this threat in several ways. Typically, the excesses of certain members of the subculture are linked to the subculture itself. After dismantling the subculture, the media then begins to redefine and soften its meaning, thus beginning a process of restoration of the members of the subculture back into the general culture. However, this process begins only when the marketplace begins to accept the meanings of the subculture’s commodities. Once this economic function begins, it generates acceptability. As Hall (1977) asserts, “Those young people who choose to inhabit a spectacular youth culture are simultaneously *returned* as they are represented on TV and in the newspapers, to the place where common sense would have them fit” (as cited in Hebdige, 1991, p. 94). This process of restoration is expressed in two ways: first, “the conversion of subcultural signs (dress, music, etc.) into mass-produced objects (i.e., the commodity form)” and, second “the ‘labeling’ and re-definition of deviant behavior by dominant



groups—the police, the media, the judiciary (i.e., the ideological form)” (p. 94).

In this study, the above restoration strategies are examined in analyzing the subcultures that developed during the 1960s and their representation in police and detective television programs.

### The Crime Show Genre

The producers of crime programs found that their product needed to reflect the tensions of the new decade. Television programs are a commodity, providing a platform for delivering advertising, and as such, are sold to these advertisers. Further, as Fiske (1989a) state “A commodity must also bear the interests of the people” (p. 23). This process of gaining popular interest rests upon delivering programs to the viewers that they can connect to their everyday lives. Therefore, before beginning an examination of how police/detective programs reflected and/or reacted to the events of the 1960s, a canvass of the literature concerning the genre is necessary to determine its conventions and how they were used to create meaning by both the producers and ultimate-end users of these programs.

Feuer (1997) offers a summation of three approaches that genre theorists use in their exploration of films and which can be used to examine television crime programs. The first is the “Aesthetic Approach,” which “includes all attempts to define genre in terms of a system of conventions that permits artistic expression, especially involving individual authorship” (p. 145). This approach, is usually identified with early auteur theory and is also

concerned with determining whether an “individual work fulfills or transcends its genre” (p. 145). Feuer’s second approach is the “Ritual Approach,” which “sees genre as an exchange between industry and audience, an exchange through which a culture speaks to itself” (p. 145). The third approach is identified as “Ideological.” This approach “views genre as an instrument of control” (p. 145) and asserts that genre films promote the dominant economic and social system. Feuer also points out that more recent approaches have combined elements of the ritual approach and the ideological approach. For purposes of this presentation, this combined approach is the most useful.

Altman (1984) as described this fourth approach:

“Because the public doesn’t want to know that it’s being manipulated, the successful ritual/ideological ‘fit’ is almost always one that disguises Hollywood’s potential for manipulation while playing up its capacity for entertainment. . . . The successful genre owes its success not alone to its reflection of an audience ideal, not solely to its status as apology for the Hollywood enterprise, but to its ability to carry out both functions simultaneously”. (as cited in Feuer, 1997, p. 145)

*Ritual Approach:*

The ritual approach, through which the genre is seen “as an exchange between the industry and the audience” (Feuer, 1997, p. 145), will be examined before preceding to look at the genre’s conventions. Although not addressing the police/detective genre specifically, Fiske and Hartley (1978) developed a

model that does address Feuer's ritual approach. Fiske and Hartley are concerned with questions of the social construction of meaning and the development of a consensus around social values, as well as the role that television plays as a "bardic" negotiator between popular culture and those who consume it. They assert that "television functions as a social ritual, overriding individual distinctions, in which our cultural engages in order to communicate with its collective" (p. 85). In other words, the medium has assumed the role of a modern bard. They further contend that the messages that this modern-day bard relates are intended to promote the dominant ideology of society:

Television responds with a predominance of messages which propagate and re-present the dominant class ideology. Groups which can be recognized as having a culturally validated but subordinate identity, such as the young, blacks, women, rock-music fans, etc., will receive a greater or lesser amount of coverage according to their approximation of the mythology of the bourgeois. (p. 89)

To reinforce their contention, Fiske and Hartley (1978) list several commonly held qualities that both the traditional bard and modern television have in common. They assert that both the traditional bard and television serve as a "mediator of language" (p. 85). Their idea is important for this study, not only does it acknowledge that a common language is a necessity in maintaining a communal identity, but it also acknowledges that, because television operates on both a verbal and visual level, the language it mediates is also on the level

of style. It legitimizes popular taste and, by implication, the values associated with those tastes, such as fashion, decorum, and general appearance. In this capacity it can also aid in the assimilation of new styles into society, and although this might appear to legitimize these new styles, the real purpose is to co-opt their meaning and allow them to function within the parameters allowed by the dominant ideology. This mediation between new style and the dominant ideology is as important aspect in the negotiations for meaning that occurred in the 1960s.

Fiske and Hartley (1978) further maintain that “the real ‘authority’ for both bardic and television messages is the audience” (p. 86). This requires that television productions must be polysemic—“capable of producing multiple means and pleasures” (Fiske, 1989c, p. 158)—so that divergent groups in society can find alternate meanings relevant to their different social situations. In order to achieve this goal, “the bardic mediator occupies the center of its culture,” and its voice must be “oral, not literate,” providing the audience with an easily recognizable code addressing everyday life and avoiding abstract notions (Fiske & Hartley, 1978, pp. 86-87). Further, both the bard and television are usually positive, even dynamic, in drawing the audience into the central position they have established, validating both society’s myths and its “a priori assumption about the nature of reality which most of the time culture is content to leave unstated and unchallenged” (p. 87), thus supporting society’s socialization process. Fiske and Hartley acknowledge that mythology operates

on this latent level through connotation rather than denotation, and they therefore theorize that these messages need not be fully apprehended by the audience for the message to be effective.

In order to pursue the qualities of the bardic mediator, Fiske and Hartley (1978) outline several functions that television must perform. It must “articulate” society’s consensus and “implicate” the viewer in its dominant ideology through providing “status-enhancing” messages that support the ideology (p. 88).

Television must also “celebrate, explain, interpret and justify the doings of the culture’s individual representatives in the world out-there; using the mythology of individuality to claw back such individuals from any mere eccentricity to a position of socio-centrality” (Fiske & Hartley, 1978, p. 88). This “claw back” function reinforces the “positive and dynamic” nature of television, as it attempts to address individuals who conceive of rifts in society and draw them back into the center. Hall, et al. (1978) maintains that, although culture demands a central value system, “this view denies any major structural discrepancies between different groups, or between the very different maps of meaning in a society” (p. 55). If these rifts are not addressed in the program there can be consequences for the show’s reception, as Fiske and Hartley point out:

If a subject *cannot* be clawed back into a socio-central position the audience is left with the conclusion that some point in their culture’s

response to reality is inadequate. The effect is to show, by means of this observed inadequacy, that some modification in attitudes of ideology will be required to meet the changed circumstances. (p. 89)

For television to remain the center of culture, programs must also expose, or acknowledge, the rifts in that culture, as well as maintain the dominant value system. The solution for Fiske (1989c) is for producers to go beyond the polysemic text and construct what he terms a “producerly text.” In arriving at this term, Fiske draws on Barthes’ (1972) evaluation of written texts. Barthes’ analysis differentiated between what he termed a “readerly text” and “writerly texts.” According to his analysis, the readerly text invites the reader to remain passive and “accept its meanings as already made” (Fiske, 1989c, p. 103), whereas the writerly text “challenges the reader constantly to rewrite it” (p. 103). The readerly text is acknowledged to be easier to read and understand, whereas the writerly text allows for more participation on the part of the reader. Fiske contended that the producer must combine those two concepts and construct a “producerly text,” thus allowing the television program enough room to support the dominant political, economic, and social ideology while still allowing for the construction, on the part of the viewers, for other meanings which have relevance in their everyday lives.

According to Fiske and Hartley (1978) to support the dominant ideology, the program must “assure the culture at large of its practical adequacy” through affirming that the dominant ideology is actively engaged

with the viewer's everyday life and through exposing changing conditions that might call into question elements of the dominant ideology as inadequacies in the culture and not the ideology; in other words, the program must work "to convince the audience that their status and identity as individuals is guaranteed by the culture as a whole," and "to transmit by these means a sense of cultural membership" (p. 88).

*Aesthetic Approach:*

Borrows and Simon (1962) focus on the conventions associated with police/detective programs, and, as such, provide a good starting point to discuss aspects of the "aesthetic" approach. When discussing the portrayal of the detective in works of popular culture, they devised several categories to differentiate the main characters. The first category is termed the "cerebral sleuth," who is a refined member of the upper class and who, because of this advantage, is highly educated. The pursuit of a case is beneath the cerebral sleuth's position in society, but because of his or her ability and notoriety, people seek him or her out. The methods of the cerebral sleuth are similar to what is now known as profiling, concentrating on both the site of the crime and the criminal. Their solutions are generally unexpected, but always correct. Sherlock Holmes, as well as Ellery Queen and Nick and Nora Charles, of *The Thin Man* film series, are examples of detectives who fit this category. The second classification is the "transcendental sleuth." Philip Marlowe is an example of this type of detective, the cynical, "hard-boiled" loner. These

detectives, while believing that society is beyond repair, elevate themselves above their environment by insisting that a moral victory is more important than the pursuit of money. Unlike that of their cerebral counterparts, violence is a staple of the transcendental sleuths' methodology.

Closely related and generally tied to the conventions associated with the transcendental/hard boiled detective are elements of *film noir*. Schrader (1986) notes that "film noir is defined by tone rather than genre" (p. 170), and therefore called for film noir to be reduced "to its primary colors (all shades of black), those cultural and stylistic elements to which any definition must return" (p. 170). He identifies *noir* with the post-World War II period in American culture. Using such movies as *Cornered* (Edward Dmytryk, 1945), *The Blue Dahlia* (George Marshall, 1946), *Dead Reckoning* (John Cromwell, 1947) and *Ride the Pink Horse* (Robert Montgomery, 1947) as representative, Schrader contended that this was a period in which:

a serviceman returns from the war to find his sweetheart unfaithful or dead, or his business partner cheating him, or the whole society something less than worth fighting for. The war continues, but now the antagonism turns with a new viciousness toward American society itself. (p. 172)

In addition to the "postwar realism," reflected in the above quotation, Schrader (1986) maintains that *noir* was influenced by two other elements. The first was the number of German filmmakers who had immigrated to



Hollywood, either as a result of the industry's luring them into American films or as a reaction to the growth of Nazi power prior to the onset of war. These filmmakers were influenced by the German expressionist movement. The other element was a commitment to continue the hard-boiled tradition of detective movie fiction. The combination of all of these elements produced reactionary themes in which there is a "passion for the past and present, but also a fear of the future" (p. 177), and in which the primary goal is to survive in the present. These elements of the film noir theme "emphasize loss, nostalgia, lack of clear priorities, and insecurity, then submerge these self-doubts in mannerism and style" (p. 177). In terms of its influence on television productions of police/detective narratives, *film noir* can be credited with providing the following recurring techniques:

1. The majority of scenes are lit for night.
2. As in German expressionism, oblique and vertical lines are preferred to horizontal.
3. The actors and settings are often given equal lighting emphasis
4. Compositional tension is preferred to physical action. (pp. 175-176)

*Noir's* expression on television, however, was limited because of the medium's "demand for full lighting and close-ups" (Schrader, 1986, p. 180).

The author adds that color was "the final blow to the noir look" (p. 180).

Although, as Schrader asserts, "TV shows like *Dragnet*, *M-Squad*, *Lineup*, and *Highway Patrol* stepped in to create the new crime drama" (p. 180), elements

of both the *noir* style and theme continued to find their way into television police/detective programs. In fact, during the early 1960s these stylistic devices, having gained familiarity and having established themselves in motion pictures, were credited with adding elements of realism to television productions. Newcomb (1979) credits the subtle shading achieved through the use of chiaroscuro lighting with establishing *The Untouchables* as a hit for ABC television. This appraisal was shared by Himmelstein (1994), who equated the use of hand-held cameras, contrasting lighting, and remote camera work with the perception of realism on the series. However, as the 1960s evolved, and as color became standard, the techniques developed by *film noir* were replaced by the use of more expansive sets, more traditional lighting, and more exotic locales.

The third category in Borrows and Simon's (1962) system is the "visceral sleuth," who is most often an unmarried member of the upper or upper-middle class. These detectives also exhibit the trappings and live the lifestyle associated with their economic position. Although not as cynical as the transcendental sleuth, their moral compass is not as refined, and their actions and motivation can best be described as mercenary. Mike Hammer is an example of this type of detective. The last category is the "organizational sleuth." This classification includes the police detective, who frequently encounters bureaucratic opposition as well as criminal opposition. The organizational sleuth does not mind bending the rules as long as the goal of

solving the crime and catching the “bad guy” is accomplished. Police procedures are highlighted in this type of presentation. All of these categorizations found a place in police/detective programs on television.

Norden (1985) uses the above classifications, applying them to television, to describe detectives; however, he notes that Shaheen (1975) adds another classification to their system. This fifth category is the “amateur sleuth,” an ordinary person cast as a detective. Norden cites the Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew as representative of this category. He also points out that this form was adaptable for early television. Not only was an established audience present, which was developed through fiction and radio programming, but the production costs were not excessive, because the programs were set in contemporary times, not requiring special costumes or sets or expensive special effects. Norden, citing Stasheff and Bretz (1973), further assert that in order to maintain the show’s rating, producers learned that “the culprits must run [be involved in a chase] for four or five minutes at the very least and meet their end with a shoot out in a darkened warehouse” (pp. 83-84). Norden also attributes the producers with devising certain format changes to differentiate their productions from other detective shows. As an example, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Warner Brothers developed several series that moved their locations from the traditional home of the genre, New York or Chicago, to more exotic regions such as Hollywood, Hawaii, New Orleans, or Miami. According to Norden, this technique has proved successful as “the interest in

using other environments . . . continued strong, with Hawaii and San Francisco emerging as particular favorites” (Norden, 1985, pp. 48-49).

Other elements in the differentiation process included the use of period settings, particularly the 1930s; giving the hero a “gimmick” or a trademark, such as the rumpled trench coat of Columbo; and physical and gender differentiation, such as the pudginess of Frank Cannon or the glamour of Honey West. Age, as with the Hardy Boys, and ethnicity, as with Thomas Bannacek, were also used to set the detectives apart. The concept of the loner detective has also undergone change, with more and more programs featuring groups involved in detective work. This process began in the late 1950s with the use of alternating detectives in *77 Sunset Strip*; this decision was initially based on the producer’s economic concerns. Warner Brothers had just experienced a strain on the production schedule of their first television hit, *Cheyenne*, because of Clint Walker’s salary dispute, and they did not want to give any one actor the power to halt production in the future (Anderson, 1994, p. 241). The trend was accelerated in the mid-to-late 1960s, when shows such as *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.*, *I Spy*, and *The Mod Squad* began to feature ensemble casts. Norden (1985) makes one other observation that should be mentioned. He asserts that early crime shows “encourage[d] strong audience participation” (p. 48), pointing to *They Stand Accused*, *Stand By For Crime*, and *Armchair Detective*, as examples of programs that allowed either the studio audience or guest stars to solve the case. Of course, the home audience was

also expected to participate. Although this direct format has changed, the invitation to the viewer to solve the crime before the televised detective remains a staple for this genre. This is one of the “hooks” associated with the genre. On the surface, this element seems to promote more participation by the viewer; however, the ultimate judge in this competition between the audience member and the television detective is the text itself, because it gives the final solution.

*Ideological Approach:*

Using the “ideological” approach, the third approach mentioned by Feuer (1997), Robards (1985) maintains that rather than coming out on top in the ratings battle the police drama is “obsessed with coming out on top in the eternal struggle between right and wrong” (p. 11). Thus, the genre is constantly working to reestablish the necessity of social order. Robards draws a distinction between police and detective programs, maintaining that the police shows rely on action and remain based in reality, whereas the detective series demonstrate more character development and plot movement toward romance and even fantasy. Although this distinction has become blurred as police programs have sought to differentiate themselves and promote viewer identification with individual characters through the inclusion of more details about their private lives, during the 1960s, generally, the inclusion of personal information concerning the police officer was not a significant portion of the police program format. The viewer of the police program *Dragnet* might know

that Joe Friday was single and resisted any attempt by his partner to arrange dates for him. This information was superfluous to the plot and did not influence the sergeant's ability to seek "just the facts." Similarly, the principal character in *Hawaii Five-0*, Steve McGarrett, "didn't have a personal life, or even much of a personality" (Martindale, 1991, p. 203). In projecting the necessary action within the police program, violence becomes the key visual element. Robards concurred with Fiske and Hartley (1978), in their reflection that violence represents "not the dominance of one personality over another, but of one social role over another social one" (p. 35), and thus television violence in these programs performs as an artistic convention, both projecting meaning and allowing the audience to distinguish the portrayal from "real" violence. While the audience can become voyeurs—riding "in the back seat of the squad car" (Robards, 1985, p. 12) and experiencing the darker side of urban life—because of their economic and social positions, they can also remove themselves from this experience. Further, these conventions assure that the audience knows what the villain's end will be. Also in performing its function of promoting the advisability of social order, Robards notes that

there is never much question about how bad the bad guy is on a police show or whether he's bad (and even more important, whether we're good), just as there is a minimum of concern for due process of law or any of the other legal mechanisms of justice. (p. 12)

While maintaining its conservative outlook, the police show has yielded to social pressures. Robards (1985) observes that the televised police force has opened to include Black and women members—and in recent programs, Brown and gay ones also—and therefore is no longer an exclusive domain of White males. Further, the absolute correctness, and therefore the authority, of the police can also be called into question. But these indiscretions are portrayed as the result of individual actions, not institutional ones. Further, the genre has countered the questions of correctness and authority by personalizing the police force. By borrowing from detective programs, Robards claims that “television has humanized the police by making the audience privy to their personal lives” (p. 12). This trend, far from diminishing the authority of police institutions, effectively serves to justify the individual police officer’s abuses of that authority, not as an agent of that authority, but as a normal individual faced with personal problems or as a professional confronted with a judicial system that favors the criminal’s rights over the swift suppression of crime. This trend to personalize the police detective was accelerated following the 1960s as the political climate legitimized a more conservative reaction to crime.

The observations made by Robards (1985) concerning due process and legal procedures were echoed by Carlson (1985), who focuses on examining the influence that viewing prime time police shows has on American attitudes toward its criminal justice system. Carlson contends that crime shows omit a great deal of information about the legal process and that content analysis of

these programs reveals that the constitutional rights of suspects are not promoted in a sympathetic manner. He concludes that these programs are “morality plays that transmit the simple message that legal compliance is an important norm and the violations of the law are always punished” (p. 189).

T. Bennett (1990) traces the development of detective fiction and establishes several key elements found in these writings:

Ideologies of individualism, of science and of rationality; the development of the city; the development of police forces and related forms of surveillance—those are the kinds of considerations invoked in virtually all accounts of the genre’s development. (p. 213)

While this section of his book primarily focuses on the works of Edgar Allen Poe and on the Sherlock Holmes phenomenon, many of the observations concerning the relevance of this fictional form to the readers of that time can be applied to the fans of 1960s television crime programs. As the above statement indicates, three elements of early detective fiction made this type of fiction relevant to the reader. First, there is an acknowledgment of the changing role of the individual in society as science and the notion of rationality began to dominate the thinking of that society. Through this acknowledgment, crime programs serve to privilege the professional criminal in that they concede that his or her actions are rational. Thus, they serve to ratify the notion that a new class of criminal exists, persons motivated by desires apart from simple survival. This new class of criminal requires a new class of professional police



and detectives in order to maintain order in society. This also has implications for the ordinary officer on the beat. Although portrayed as an average “Joe” in the series *Dragnet*, Sergeant Friday, through his dedication, hard work, and experience, and with the aid of new advances in criminal investigation can thwart even the most sophisticated criminal.

The second element in T. Bennett’s (1990) analysis is the admission of the development of the city, the move from an agrarian to an urban economic base. This admission not only allows for a shift in setting from the frontier West to the urban East as a focus for new programs, but it also allows for the extension of the criminal class to include a more ethnically-based villain. However, by the same token, it also allows for a more ethnically-based deterrent force, that is, for every Italian mobster there was an Irish cop on the beat dedicated to deterring his efforts. Beyond this, the acknowledgment of diversification within the urban setting allows for an expanded pool from which to draw new members into the cast, which included Blacks and women into the police force, an aspect of programs featured in the late 1960s.

Finally, T. Bennett (1990) cites the growth of state surveillance as a method of deterring crime in that urban environment as a major ingredient in police and detective fiction. This aspect is closely links to the first of T. Bennett’s observations in that surveillance became a logical extension of the use of technology as a deterrent to crime. Once established, the justification for surveillance followed—society needed to keep track of criminals and potential

criminals in order to protect all the noncriminal members of society—and it became institutionalized as a proper function of the “protectors” in society. This myth was promoted throughout the decade in both police and detective programs. However, there is a contradiction between the mythology of surveillance by authority and the notion of the individual as it became cast in American mythology. It would seem that as individuals distance themselves from urban centers, the justification for state-sponsored surveillance is perceived to diminish, and thus, the use of these techniques can be questioned. During the 1960s police/detective programs battled these two mythologies, constantly attempting to assure their viewers of the need for surveillance while at the same time acknowledging the American concept of the individual. Programs such as *The Fugitive*, while promoting an individual in his quest for justice and portraying Americans as capable of transcending the letter of the law in favor of its spirit, still did not challenge the correctness of society to pursue a criminal; rather, they demonized the pursuer. Bennett’s analysis also provides a useful set of parameters from which to study police/detective programs. Through focusing on the changing role of the individual, the growth of urban centers, and the use of surveillance as a legitimate function of the state, detective programs can be studied as a means through which the issues, and uses, of authority were negotiated in the 1960s. These issues of authority are common in both detective and police programs of the 1960s, as they were in a subgenre that grew in popularity during this period—the espionage

program. For this reason, several examples of this subgenre are included in this analysis.

As important as genre theory is as an aid in determining consensual meaning because the conventions of the program are accepted by both the producer and the viewer, each program, in fact, each episode, must stand on its own in establishing a relationship between itself and the viewer. The following section explores how such meaning is generated in the text of each program.

#### Reading the Text of Police and Detective Programs

Fiske (1987) offers a method for the evaluation of both the television program's text and image, comprising three levels at which four different codes connect to produce a final product that is "organized into coherence and social acceptability" by the ideological or mythological tenets that are consensually held by society (p. 5). Fiske maintains that on the first level—"reality"—social codes are based on consensual agreement and are infused into the production through dress, makeup, behavior, speech, gesture, expression, which are encoded by "technical codes"—"camera, lighting, editing, music, sound"( p. 5)—into representations of those consensual visions of reality. These "conventional representational codes," such as conflict, action, character development, setting and dialogue, as well as casting, because the actors "bring with them not only residues of the meanings of other roles they have played, but also their meanings from other texts such as fan magazines, showbiz gossip columns, and television criticism" (pp. 8-9), shape the ideology of the

messages in the program. Among these “ideological codes” are “individualism, patriarchy, race, class, materialism, and capitalism” (p. 5). However, Fiske points out that the ideological codes are present at every level of this schema. The “physical differences in the social codes of setting and dress [and makeup] are also bearers of the ideological codes of class, of heroism, and villainy, of morality, and of attractiveness” (p. 10). The depiction of both setting and dress, which work openly, not only guarantees the validity and naturalness of socially constructed and accepted, concepts of reality, but also supports the ideological codes, which work less openly.

According to Fiske (1987), the technical codes are also used to project ideological statements through arranging the frames in a way to solicit sympathy from the viewer. “Camera distance is used to swing our sympathies away from the villain and villainess, and toward the hero and heroine” (pp. 6-7). Lighting can also be used to create sympathies through showing the hero and heroine and/or their surroundings in a soft light while reserving a harsher light for the villain and villainess. Music can also be used as a cue to identify the hero and heroine through the use of major keys, and the villain and villainess with minor ones. Further, editing can give the hero and heroine more time on the screen as well as appearance in more shots. The action within the narrative can also be used to convey positive relationships between the heroes and/or heroines, such as cooperation and closeness, while depicting the villains

and/or villainesses as devoid of these traits. Like music, lighting, setting, and costumes, dialogue can also be used to affect viewer sympathy.

To illustrate these functions, three crime programs will be briefly examined. The first is the “Durable Mike Malloy” (1955) episode from the 1950s television series *Gangbusters*. The next two examples come from 1960s television, “The Big Interrogation” (February 9, 1967) episode of *Dragnet* and *I Spy*’s “A Day Called 4 Jaguar” (c. 1967).

In the *Gangbusters* episode, the audience is introduced to patrol officer Jerry Cameron, who informs the viewers that he is a part of the community he protects and that he has a story of murder and greed to relate. In essence, Cameron’s story revolves around two community businessmen who concoct an insurance fraud scheme involving the murder of two innocent people. Their scheme runs into two problems. The first is the durability of their last victim, a street-wise alcoholic. Exploiting his problem, the villains offer him free drinks for life in exchange for signing an insurance policy naming one of them as his beneficiary. Their second problem is the commitment of the officer on the beat. Cameron questions the death of the businessmen’s first victim, a young woman he knew because she was a member of the community he served. Both of these problems ultimately lead the villains into making a mistake that results in the discovery of their plan and their arrest.

An illustration of the “social codes” can be found near the beginning of the *Gangbusters* episode, when the audience is informed that Mike Malloy is

“what some people might call a bum.” Mike is introduced to the audience wearing a tattered coat, needing a shave, and intermittently wiping his nose, all of which reinforce his description as a bum. However, he is also shown with a dog with a tattered rope for a leash, which offers the perception that Malloy is kind-hearted and cares for animals despite his lowly economic status. Officer Cameron is shown wearing a crisp uniform, signifying authority and attention to his job. This encounter occurs beside an empty lot, indicating that the community is located in a lower-class area. The environment, appearance, dress, makeup, behavior, gestures, and speech form already encoded social codes that reinforce the ideological codes that authority, as represented by Cameron, cares for all classes of people.

The “A Day Called 4 Jaguar” episode of *I Spy* aired in the mid-1960s. The episode presented two American espionage agents Kelly Robinson (Robert Culp) and Alexander Scott (Bill Cosby) searching rural Mexico for a missing Russian cosmonaut who might wish to defect to the West. During their search, they find themselves threatened by Soviet agents, equally determined to find the cosmonaut. One sequence from this episode illustrates how camera movement, one of the components of the “technical code,” can be used to project an ideological meaning. When the villain escapes after attempting to murder a young woman in a Mexican hospital, the audience is presented with a point-of-view (POV) shot using an uncharacteristic hand-held camera. This

disjointed presentation implies that Soviet agents act in an atypical nature and are incapable of making quick, rational decisions.

When “The Big Interrogation” episode of *Dragnet* aired in 1967, the assumptions of the above *Gangbuster*’s program were being questioned by an increasing number of Americans. Far from being perceived as egalitarian in their enforcement of the law, the police forces in many areas of the country, especially in the South and on college campuses, were associated with both repression and racism. “The Big Interrogation” is a polemical answer to those feelings. Martindale (1991) offered the following plot summary of the episode: “Friday and Gannon investigate an armed robbery in which an undercover cop becomes the prime suspect when it is discovered he fits the description of the holdup man” (p. 134).

The use of “conventional representational codes” to convey ideological meaning can be demonstrated by comparing the ending of “The Big Interrogation” episode with the ending of another episode from the same series, which features the detectives investigating a more traditional crime. This episode is “The Big Hammer” (1967, March 2), in which “Friday and Gannon trail the murderer of an apartment manager to a small Arizona town” (Martindale, 1991, p. 134). During this episode’s trademark ending, the murderer is pictured in front of a light brown backdrop, looking down as the audience is informed that he has been found guilty of murder. He looks up, and his eyes shift back and forth, never meeting the eye line of the camera and

projecting the image of a person who cannot be trusted. He is wearing a tan suit coat, but without a tie, conveying the impression that he does not care to present a respectable appearance, even though he has ostensibly appeared in court. Under his picture, the viewer is presented with the following caption:

FREDERICK LAWRENCE TOSCA  
NOW AWAITING EXECUTION  
IN THE STATE PENITENTIARY  
SAN QUENTIN, CALIFORNIA

This negative presentation is in direct contrast to the ending of “The Big Interrogation,” which focuses on the exoneration of a policeman falsely suspected of committing a crime. Here the backdrop is a warm light blue, which serves to draw attention to the officer’s dark blue uniform, which serves to draw attention to the silver medal on his chest. The audience is informed that the officer received the medal of valor for subduing an armed bank robber. Although he does not look into the camera, and his eyes move back and forth, they are bright and are focused above the eye line of the camera. He also has an expression of confidence and pride. The caption reads:

OFFICER PAUL CULVER  
NOW WORKING  
CENTRAL DIVISION  
PATROL DUTY

The audience is left with the impression that officer Culver is not only honest, but also brave and dedicated, still out there protecting the public.

Through an examination of the text using the mediation functions described by Fiske and Hartley (1987) and the visuals of the program using the



codes of television outlined above, a model can be formed for investigating how the dominant ideology, in general, and the maintenance and protection of authority, in particular, are advanced by a television program.

### Limitations and Outline of the Study

One of the major limitations of this study has been gaining access to many of detective series that aired in the 1960s. The structure of this presentation, in no small way, demonstrates these limitations. Although the analysis was limited by the videos available—and in some cases, the quality of these videos—the selected programs reflect both the trends in the genre during that period and the programming choices made by the television industry for dealing with the social problems raised during the 1960s. In addition to finding videos relevant to this project, the correct attribution had to be determined for several episodes that the researcher had in his private collection and that were recorded while they were in syndication. When possible, an attempt was made to find their original air date. In this process Martindale (1991) was helpful because he listed the original date and episode title for the shows on which he focused. Although his work focused on detective shows in the 1970s, he included many series that originated in the late 1960s. Further, for the sake of brevity, lawyer shows, which include elements of detective works in their format, were excluded from this study. The programs are examined in a linear manner, beginning with those that aired in the early 1960s, moving to the

middle portion of the decade, and finally ending with three programs that were broadcast during the most turbulent periods of the years 1968 and 1969.

The second chapter focuses on a period when consensus in American society was more easily formed, the early 1960s, and examines *The Untouchables* and *77 Sunset Strip*. This section explores the cold war ideology that ran through both texts, as well as their investment in promoting authority and the agents of that authority. The examination of *77 Sunset Strip* also focuses on the depiction of the playboy lifestyle—the first subculture of the 1960s—that was adopted by the series' protagonists.

Chapter 3 concentrates on the mid-1960s, when the consensus surrounding America's dominant ideology was beginning to breakdown. It includes an examination of the *Batman* and the *Dragnet* series. This section focuses on the emergence of camp as both a device for attracting the youth market to television and as a tool for the counterculture to negotiate the meaning of the texts of those programs.

The 1960s saw the increased popularity of the espionage subgenre of the police/detective program, and two these programs, *I Spy* and *The Avengers*, are examined in chapter 4. The media's representation of minorities is examined through an analysis of *I Spy*, while the changing role of women is evaluated by looking into *The Avengers*.

*The Mod Squad* is analyzed in chapter 5, focusing on the attempts of the program to incorporate elements of the youth culture into its representation of police authority.

Chapter 6 examines *Hawaii Five-0* and *The Prisoner*, not only as examples of the types of programs being aired in the late 1960s, but more importantly, as examples of how television responded to the change in attitudes that came to represent the 1960s

## CHAPTER 2

### FROM THE JAILHOUSE TO ROCK:

#### *THE UNTOUCHABLES, AND 77 SUNSET STRIP.*

The warden threw a party in the county jail  
The prison band was there and they began to wail  
The band was jumpin' and the joint began to swing  
You should've heard those knocked out jailbirds sing  
Let's rock, everybody, let's rock  
Everybody in the whole cell block was dancin'  
to the Jailhouse Rock.  
—Jerry Leiber & Mike Stoller, “Jailhouse Rock”

Like the warden in Elvis Presley's 1957 hit song, “Jailhouse Rock”, the American Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) decided to throw a jailhouse party in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In an effort to improve their third-place position, the network looked to Hollywood to develop two of its police/detective programs. The first, *The Untouchables*, was inspired by a surprise mid-1950s rating hit. Thanks to televised Senate hearings, Americans learned of the existence of organized crime for the first time, and many people became fascinated with mobsters. ABC was quick to seize on this interest and contracted with independent Desilu to create a police series modeled after two popular film genres of earlier eras—the gangster film and film noir. The second offering, *77 Sunset Strip*, was designed to reach a more youthful audience and featured a group of single, sophisticated private investigators and

a youthful beatnik parking attendant, handsome and “cool” enough to attract the attention of almost every high school girl in America. The purpose of this chapter is to examine these two programs, both in terms of their place within the production models that existed at that time, and in terms of their place in the police/detective genre as it reflected the early 1960s. Before examining the two production approaches favored by the producers of these programs and also before examining the series’ texts, it is necessary to give a brief overview of events of the late 1950s and early 1960s as they related to the television industry.

During the middle to late 1950s a new economic force came into existence in the United States economy: Because of growing teenage consumption, new markets were opened up that were aimed toward this demographic group. The first manifestation of this economic fact was the introduction of rock ‘n’ roll music. This new music provided the primary vehicle through which American youth could reconstitute their identity, differentiating themselves from their parents’ generation. The impact of this new music was so profound that it could be cited as the beginning of the youth revolution, which would find its ultimate expression in the middle to late 1960s.

Just like the baby boomers of the period, television was engaged in finding a new identity. During the 1950s the networks gained control over their affiliates, their advertisers, and their program providers. Although by the

early part of the 1960s, many of the contractual requirements imposed upon the local affiliates by their networks, such as option time (The option time clause gave the network control over blocks of air time on their affiliates. As Barnouw [1970] pointed out, “Some lawyers had argued that these ‘network option’ clauses were equivalent to the block booking through which major Hollywood studios had controlled theaters, and which the U.S. Supreme Court had outlawed in 1948 in *U.S. v. Paramount et al.*” [pp. 200-201]. The FCC banned this practice in 1963 “as an improper surrender of licensee responsibility” [p. 201].) and exclusive agreements, were struck down by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), one fact remained, network affiliates made more money (Boddy, 1993, p.117). Further, given the fact that the cost was the same to produce a program for a network as for a local station, it was advantageous for the affiliates to remain within the network system; the networks had the money (in 1955, CBS & NBC controlled only 11% of all total television assets, yet they received 43% of the industry’s profits [p.121]).

Because of the quiz show scandal of the 1950s and public concerns about the quality of television programs as expressed by several disaffected television writers and many media critics (e.g., *Time* called the 1960 season the worst in the 13 year history of television broadcasting [Watson, 1990]), demands for network accountability for their programs increased. The result

was the development of a new form of advertising system in which the network would provide the program and sell commercial time to the advertisers. Thus, the direct control of programming switched from the advertisers to the networks. This system also aided the advertisers in two ways. First, because of the high costs associated with television production, as well as the trend, already becoming evident at that time, toward increasing costs, this new system allowed for smaller advertisers to use the medium to advance their product, and it also allowed the existing advertisers to spread the costs around (Alvey, 1997, pp. 138-158; Boddy, 1997, pp. 160-183; Fowles, 1982, p. 16).

What now remained was for the networks to find these new programs. They were aided by changes in the motion picture industry, which was itself going through a process of reidentification brought on by the Paramount decree. In 1952 the Supreme Court ruled, in *U.S. v. Paramount Pictures et al.*, “that the practice of ‘vertical control’ was in restraint of trade and tended toward monopoly” (Ellis, 1995, p. 264), which forced the major studios to divest their theater holdings. This ruling had the effect of limiting the production of B movies and caused a financial crisis because of the studio’s “enormous overhead in real estate, sound stages, expensive equipment, and high-salaried technical and creative personnel on long-term contracts could no longer be supported.” (p. 271). In addition, the development of program syndication allowed the networks to gain foreign sales. All of this meant one thing: A shift from live television to producing programs on film. This

process began in the mid-1950s, and by 1960 almost 80 % of all television programs were made in Hollywood. This was a logical transition since Hollywood had experience in producing products similar to those needed for television—especially B features, whose quick turn-around time was ideal for television—and could produce a polished entertainment product. Further, by putting the programs on film, residuals could be earned, in terms of both future domestic and foreign syndication. The networks underwrote the pilot and the production cost for shares of the first-run advertising revenue and syndication rights (Alvey, 1997, pp. 138-158).

The move to Hollywood also coincided with, and in no small degree was advanced by, ABC's desire to become competitive. The network's strategy was to pursue a younger audience (Watson, 1990), and in order to pursue this strategy, the network went to Hollywood for their programs. The network was a product of government regulation. It was formed as a result of the FCC's order to NBC to sell its Blue Radio Network, and when television was projected as the future of broadcasting it was aided in its attempts to gain financing and thus become competitive by another government action—the Paramount decree. Briefly stated, UPT was forced to sell off its assets, producing a large amount of liquid capital. With this extra money, and after the former film distributors promised the FCC that their move would not reflect any Hollywood sensibilities in their management decisions, they purchased a



number of radio stations from ABC. With the money generated from these sales, ABC was able to look to Hollywood to produce high-quality programming geared to a more youth-oriented audience. By the mid-1950s, 50 % of ABC's programming was on film (Baughman, 1990, pp. 91-113).

When ABC looked to Hollywood to produce programs in the police/detective genre, they found two primary sources, Desilu productions—an independent—and Warner Brothers—a major studio. Although both of these operations produced popular products, they differed in their approach to both production techniques and appeal. Yet both products reflected the dominant cultural and the political and economic ideologies of the early 1960s.

#### The Independent Model: Desilu and *The Untouchables*

One of the most successful independent—non-studio—production units was Desilu, and according to many observers this production company helped transform both the technical and economic practices of 1950s television. The company owed its financial base to the popularity of the situation comedy *I Love Lucy*, starring Lucille Ball and her husband Dezi Arnaz. During the initial period of negotiations between the stars and the network concerning the development of the show, Arnaz approached CBS, offering it a concession. He contended that the program needed to provide a higher quality presentation, using the more expensive process of placing the show on film and the use of three, rather than one, camera (a idea insisted on by Ball). Arnaz and Ball would accept a reduction in their salary to offset the increased production costs,

and after the show's first run on the network, CBS, in turn, would relinquish its control over the syndication rights of the series. Desilu leased the former RKO facilities and began production on future episodes of the popular series. The earnings from the program's syndication, possible only because the programs were saved on film, provided the company with a substantial financial base. *I Love Lucy* also provided the company with a model from which to expand their production. Through their experience in producing the series, the crew learned how to economize on camera set-ups and soon realized the cost savings involved in filming the program on a sound stage. Cost was also reduced by limiting the sets and locales involved in the story line. The program also limited its cast and used a repetitive plot structure, which further kept costs down. Their production schedule also promoted cost reduction, with only 2 days of practice and the final production shot on Friday night. This not only led to better cost control, but also opened up the studio up for other work (Schatz, 1990, pp. 117-135). The series was also shot on film. This innovation is generally attributed to Lucille Ball, who wanted to increase the quality of the production (Zoglin, 1995, p. 189). It did increase the quality of the production, and it also provided a vehicle, through syndication, to increase their revenue.

In the 1950s, Desilu produced more products for television than any other independent or any major studio. However, as the networks saw the

potential for profits through syndication, they set up their own production studios and the influence of Desilu began to diminish (Schatz, 1990, 117-135).

One series that the company produced, beginning in the 1950s and carrying into the early 1960s, was *The Untouchables*. The series got its name from the Oscar Fraley's book about Treasury agent Eliot Ness, his squad and the gangsters of the 1930s Prohibition era. Arnaz purchased the dramatic rights to the book in the spring of 1959, and hired Quinn Martin to produce a two-part episode, for the *Desilu Playhouse*. The episode, "The Scarface Mob," proved popular, and led to the development of the series. Although CBS aired the premier episodes, the weekly series was sold to ABC (Sanders & Gilbert, 1993, pp. 173-176).

Martin continued to produce the series, which proved to be his first major break. Martin quickly began to make the most of his new role: He began by introducing the program as a Quinn Martin Production and divided the production into segments, which he called acts, two devices which would be extended to other Martin productions (Marc & Thompson, 1992, p. 153). After getting off to a rocky start—"Van Johnson was originally slated to play Eliot Ness, but he backed out the weekend before filming was to start in a dispute over money" (*The Untouchables*, 1999)—the series, now featuring Robert Stack, proved to be the network's first ratings success (Marc & Thompson, 1992, p. 153).

*The Untouchables* featured tough cops, violence, a black and white presentation, and the narration of Depression and World War II radio personality Walter Winchell to achieve popular success (Toll, 1982, p. 175). The gangsters were extreme in both the bravado of their persona and their use of violence. The federal agents, who relentlessly pursued the criminals were “clean-as-a-whistle” (Lichter, Lichter, & Rothman, 1991, p. 190) and represented moralist crime fighters, taking a hard line on crime and those who gained through it (Fretts, 1999, pp. 52-53). The style of *The Untouchables*, filmed in black and white with hand held cameras, high-contrast lighting, and remote camera work, gave the program a documentary look and promoted a sense of realism (Himmelstein, 1994, p. 228; Silber, 1979, pp. 295-296). This realism was also advanced through the use of Winchell as the narrator (Marc & Thompson, 1992, pp. 153-161). Not only was Winchell’s voice known to many viewers, but he was also associated with the gangsters portrayed on the show—it was Winchell who arranged the surrender of feared Murder, Inc. boss, Louis “Lepke” Buchalter to FBI director J. Edgar Hoover shortly before World War II. In short, this was a new type of crime show, combining realism with a social concern (Fretts, 1999, pp. 52-53).

However, the key to the program’s success was violence. The series featured dramatic gunfights by both federal agents and mobsters. One episode showed three bystanders killed and six others injured before the untouchables

finally came in and dispatched the mob. This format was encouraged by the network, which wanted less talk and more action (Toll, 1982, p. 175).

Although the program achieved popularity, from the outset the series promoted controversy. The table below, made up of headlines appearing in *The New York Times* in 1961, indicates both the types and frequency of the controversies following the series.

Table 1

The New York Times & *The Untouchables*:

<u>Data</u>	<u>Headlines</u>
January 8, 1961	Italians protest
January 13, 1961	Protest & disclaimer about Federal Bureau of Prisons
February 2, 1961	250 picket ABC about Italian names
March 10, 1961	250 picket ABC about Italian names
March 10, 1961	ABC promises changes.
March 13, 1961	Congressman Santangelo calls for boycott of Liggett & Meyers and <i>The Untouchables</i> .
March 15, 1961	L & M backs off its sponsorship of <i>The Untouchables</i>
March 18, 1961	ABC & Arnaz back off Italian names
September 29, 1961	FCC condemns ABC about prison guards.

Source: *The New York Times*, January 13, 1961; January 18, 1961; February 2, 1961, p. 59:2; March 10, 1961, p. 55:4; March 13, 1961, p. 59:1; March 15, 1961, p. 79:3; March 18, 1961; September 29, 1961, p. 71:4;

The most explosive controversy involving *The Untouchables* concerned the use of Italian names for the criminals depicted in the program. Although much of the criticism leveled at the program may have been inspired by organized criminal elements this criticism was not unjustified. Lichter et al. (1991) characterize the tendency of the series to use Italian names in the following manner: “Italians were often portrayed as hoods or thugs working for a criminal gang. Ill-mannered, poorly educated, and violent, these characters were among the [most] negative portrayals of any ethnic group during TV’s early years” (p. 235). No matter who organized the protests, they produced a reaction from the advertising firm of McCann-Erickson, which controlled the Liggett and Meyers account. This in turn, provoked a response from ABC and Desilu (Goldenson, 1991, pp. 172-174). One year after its debut no more fictional Italian names were used on *The Untouchables*, and the producers pledged to place more emphasis on the Rossi character, the Italian-American federal agent (Shaheen, 1984, pp. 121-122). The series, still not getting the point, changed the Italian names to Greek ones before finally including Anglo names (Marc, 1984, pp. 79-80).

Federal prison guards also took exception to one episode, which depicted the transfer of Al Capone to Alcatraz, and showed the guards “in an unfavorable light.” Their complaints resulted in a FCC reprimand to ABC for being “clearly derelict” in not informing the public that the episode was fictional (“FCC Rebukes ABC,” 1961, p. 71:4). The program was also

responsible for a series of congressional hearings on violence (Marc, 1984, pp. 79-80). As Boddy (1997) points out, although neither reform nor any new legislation resulted from these hearings, the process did expose a number of revelations about how the industry viewed violence. A memo was leaked concerning the violence on *The Untouchables*, demonstrating that the producers (and ABC) encouraged it (Fowles, 1982, p. 16). In part, the memo from producer Martin stated,

I wish you would come up with a different device than running the man down with a car, as we have done this in three different shows. I like the idea of sadism, but I hope we can come up with another approach to it. (*The Untouchables*, 1999).

These controversies may have resulted in the loss of popularity and ultimate cancellation of the program. However, Toll (1982) maintains that the show was killed because of the changing of the names of the criminals—thus losing a perception of reality—and an increased public sensibility toward violence caused by the Kennedy assassination.

To understand the series commitment to authority it is first necessary to discuss the impact of the cold war on American society during the period in which it was produced. There is a direct linkage exists between the championship of the institutions responsible for the support and maintenance of the American political and economic systems and the perceived Communist threat.

As early as 1948, Communist organizations were gaining popular appeal in Italy and France as their respective governments were encountering difficulties in correcting the deprivations caused by World War II. Given the fact that the Soviet Union already surrounded itself with satellite regimes in the countries where the Red Army had entered in their attempt to defeat Nazi Germany, U. S. policymakers perceived the instability of other European countries to be a major threat to Western-style democracies (Doganis, 1999). As revelations of Soviet espionage surfaced, which apparently led to their development of an atomic bomb, this concern increased. The Marshall Plan was designed to combat the perceived Communist threat in Europe; the decision was made to develop the hydrogen bomb—the super, or hell Bomb—by the government of the United States; and many political leaders, led by the Republican leadership in Congress, turned their attention toward uncovering homegrown Communists, primarily within the government and the entertainment industry (Ott, 1999).

During this same period, commercial television was conveying the message that workers in the United States were in a better position than any other working people in the world. Why? Because they could buy more. Commercials on television stressed innovation and presented products that were not only new—in contrast to the goods of other, less developed nations—but also efficient, practical, and pleasurable. Although never stated as such, there was an implied message in these commercials, namely that the American



people owed their position to their capitalist economy and “the American way” (Doganis, 1999). This hidden message was not limited to commercials but also found its way into the entertainment programs of television. Other messages in support of the white, male, heterosexual/monogamous, middle-class, capitalist values associated with that American way also found their way into these programs. Although specific in nature, such as child birth outside marriage would result in degradation for both the child and the mother, these messages, put together, can be placed in the category of maintaining the authority of the American system. The episodes reviewed in this section offer interesting case studies in both how these messages were conveyed to the public and which messages society found important to stress during the early 1960s.

*The Untouchables* commitment to the support of the institutions of authority could be seen in the producers choice of using a narrator as a vehicle to link the audience of late 1950s America with a series that featured Treasury agents and gangsters of the 1930s Prohibition era. This narrator performed the role of articulator of the established cultural consensus concerning the nature of reality (Fiske & Hartley, 1978, p. 88).

Newspaper columnist and radio personality Walter Winchell served as the narrator in *The Untouchables*. As pointed out earlier, Winchell added a degree of realism to the show through his association with the famous “Lepke” Buchalter affair. After all, if Winchell could arrange the surrender of the feared boss of Murder, Inc., he must know a great deal about the working and history

of the mob. However, of equal importance, especially in conveying the reality of late 1950s America, was Winchell's association with anti-Communism and the ferreting out of perceived Communists within the entertainment industry during the early period of the decade. In fact, it was Winchell who, in 1953, accused the future Desilu producer Lucille Ball of being a Communist (*The Untouchable*, 1999). Although these charges missed their target, and Lucy's popularity with the public sustained her career, many other charges stuck, and many other entertainers' careers suffered. In fact, Winchell's narration served two functions. When he proclaimed, as he did in "The Speculator" (Ehrlich, 1992), that there was a requirement of unanimous consent on all financial matters within the Chicago mob's ruling council, the audience was expected to take this pronouncement as fact, an insight into the internal workings of organized crime gained through Winchell's unique experiences. The narration could also have a double meaning, also as a result of Winchell's unique experiences. Thus, at the conclusion of "The Scarface Mob" (Monash, 1958) when Winchell relates that, although both Elliot Ness and Al Capone were dead "the struggle between the Capones and the Nesses, witnessed by a public that remains dangerously indifferent, goes on and on," this could be seen as a warning about public apathy toward the internal threat of agents of Communism as well as that of organized crime.

Other elements within the text of the series also linked the gangster faction with the Communist threat. The collective nature of the organization's

ruling council directly relates to the composition of the Soviet Union's ruling Politburo. Equally telling is the nature of supreme leadership. For although, theoretically, the nature of leadership is collective, in reality the organization is governed by a Stalin-like dictator. In fact, the methods of control are the same. In the episode "The Speculator" (Ehrlich, 1992), Frank Nitti (Bruce Gordon), Capone's successor, is challenged by a member of the council who feels that one of Nitti's financial ventures is unsound. Although Nitti initially yields to the rules of the collective and sustains the challenge, ultimately the dissident member is executed. As Silber (1976) asserts, the message of *The Untouchables* was that violence was tantamount to contempt for the welfare of the community. During this time, the American public could easily identify both organized criminals and the Soviet state with violence.

To further understand the influence of the cold war upon the text of *The Untouchables*, it is necessary to examine the second of Fiske & Hartley's (1978) functions of television: "to implicate the individual members of the culture into its dominant value-systems" (p. 88). In explaining this function, the authors added that "the structure of those messages are organized according to the needs of the culture, for whose ears and eyes they are intended, and not according to the internal demands of the 'text,' nor of the individual communicator" (p 85). At the time *The Untouchables* was produced "the needs of the culture" required that the messages within the text acknowledged not only the existence of the cold war but also the superiority of the American

political and economic systems in this war. Although keeping much of the form, *The Untouchables* accomplished this task by inverting the traditional gangster film genre that had grown up in 1930s cinema. According to Munby (1996), for the genre to work correctly, there must be an endorsement of society's values and sanctions by the gangster. However, in the case of *The Untouchables*, such endorsement was validated by Elliot Ness and his men and did not extend to the gangsters. Not only did the Treasury agents represent the government, they also personified American values. In evaluating the roles of police on television, Lichter, Lichter and Rothman (1991) contended that the medium has produced two distinct versions of the police. The first is the hard-nosed moralist and the second is the social worker. The untouchables clearly portrayed the former. In fact, they hated criminals, referring to them, as individuals and as a group, as thugs, punks, and hoods. Although, as Stempel (1992) points out, the plot of *The Untouchables* was motivated by the gangsters, their individual motivation was rarely a feature of the story line. One exception, and one which proves the above observation, was the episode entitled "Elegy" (Groves, 1962). In this episode a major crime family boss (John Larch) discovers that he has a terminal illness and desires to make contact with his daughter whom he abandoned to the custody of "good people," as the gang leader terms them, early in his criminal career. The boss learns that his daughter had in turn abandoned her caretaker family several years earlier; it seems that these "good people" would rather cash the boss's checks than offer

sympathetic support to the young woman. Ness (Robert Stack), who is aware of the gangster's condition, confronts him as he is leaving the "good people's" house and attempts to convince him to turn over his records and make a statement concerning his and other gang members' criminal activities. The boss initially rejects the suggestion but then pauses and relates the circumstances concerning his daughter's abandonment and disappearance. He then informs Ness that he will give him the information he desires if, in turn, Ness will find his daughter. Although the boss has demonstrated his acceptance of society's values by providing a normal environment for his daughter's upbringing at the hands of the "good people" and has expressed the desire for redemption, at least in the eyes of his daughter, these actions are not enough for rehabilitation to occur. Ness, like the earlier HUAC hearings of the decade, demands that the mobster name names before he can be accepted back into society.

In order "to celebrate, explain, interpret and justify the doings of the culture's individual representatives in the world out-there" (Fiske & Hartley, 1978, p. 88), *The Untouchables* modifies the traditional gangster film genre, placing the mobster at the bottom rung of society's moral ladder and placing the Treasury agents, the representatives of American society's authority and ethical order, in a "position of socio-centrality" (p. 88).

In investigating the gangster film genre, Mitchell (1986) maintains that there are three primary threads running through the films of this genre: (a) a

“social Darwinist tinge”; (b) what he calls, a “secularized Puritanism”; and (c) the Horatio Alger myth. Shunning the notions of sexual morality commonly associated with Puritanism, Mitchell equates “secularized Puritanism” with the sentiment “that people were conceived and born in sin, helplessly depraved and without hope of redemption except for those few whom an omnipotent and omniscient God elected to save,” and he added that “the signs of election were clear, generally manifested in increased material prosperity” (p. 159). Thus the gangsters, a product of sin, can still achieve grace through the acquisition of wealth. Here, the notion of social Darwinism comes into play, because “in the notion of survival of the fittest lay an emphasis on adaptability, which could be, and was, interpreted to mean that nature favored the more dynamic, . . . most aggressive and intelligent (which came to mean most cunning) of the species” (p. 160). The Alger hero is another aspect of Mitchell’s formula. This hero is commonly associated with a rags-to-riches story, featuring a hero or heroine advancing to success by application of both “fortitude and traditional values” (p. 160). However, according to Mitchell, “the Alger hero’s task is not so much to earn his success as it is to maintain his traditional values until the inevitable justification and restoration occur” (p. 161). These combinations, according to Mitchell, have resulted in a formula for gangster films. First, as mentioned earlier, the primary conflict is that between good and evil, with, of course, the gangster representing evil. Further, because the gangster is tainted with corruption he must face consequences that he cannot escape, and in most

cases that takes “the form of an early and violent death” (p. 163). Although his demise is fated, “the gangster survives as long as he does against heavy odds because of his energy, cunning, and bravura” (p. 163). Although the gangster may be successful in negotiating his environment, both in terms of survival and acquisition of material wealth, it is this success that leads to his being disinherited from American society; in essence, he is a usurper of the American Dream. According to Mitchell, although, the conflicting elements of Puritanism, social Darwinism, and the Horatio Alger myth “remain unresolved in America’s collective consciousness” (p. 166), in the case of *The Untouchables* no unresolved conflicts existed in America’s collective consciousness concerning crime. The Treasury agents knew that crime was lucrative, and it was not only their job, but also their moral imperative, to bring down the criminal element in society and destroy the gangsters’ comfortable lifestyle. (Lichter, et al. 1991).

In the premiere episode, “Scarface Mob” (Monash, 1959), Winchell celebrates the untouchables as men of integrity as he describes the future conflict between “six or seven honest men” and the gangsters who not only resort to violence to achieve their ends, but also have the financial means to ensure protection from the local politicians and police. Here the series once again links the itself to a cold war theme: The agents of the American government are placed in direct conflict with agents representing both violence and official cohesion, with the goal being either the maintenance or destruction

of the American political and economic system. This concern allows *The Untouchables* to reverse Michell's (1986) reading of the Puritan ethic, applying it to the forces maintaining order and authority. Thus, through hard work and honesty, the Treasury agents will come to prevail.

Although *The Untouchables* ignores much of the formula established by the gangster film genre, one aspect of the genre conforms to the formula. According to Munby (1996) in many gangster films “ethnic virtues are celebrated nostalgically—as signs of a clearer and less confusing American ‘past’ when men had an undiluted authentic and honorable ‘identity’” (pp. 102-103). Although the series came under fire for its initial portrayal of the gangster element as being prominently Italian, forcing the producers to enlarge the criminal base to include German, Jews, the Irish, and finally Anglos (Stempel, 1992, pp. 84-85), the series did associate itself with nostalgic ethnic values celebrating the honorable identity of many of these naturalized groups. Not only was the composition of the untouchables ethnically mixed, including an Italian and a Native American, it also promoted the virtues of those ethnically-based citizens who supported their attempt to fight crime. In the “Scarface Mob” (Monash, 1959) episode, the characters of Joe Fuselli (Keenan Wynn)—a reformed convict who approaches his new role as an honest man with a gusto normally associated with a former smoker—and Angelo Picco (Wolfe Baradino)—a waiter who not only demonstrates courage, loyalty, and a pronounced sense of right and wrong, but also has a small dog—are used to



demonstrate that most ethnic Americans occupy the center of culture. These messages are designed to assure the culture at large of its practical adequacy in the world by affirming and confirming its ideologies/mythologies in active engagement with the practical and potentially unpredictable world (Fiske & Hartley, 1978, p. 88).

Another element that Munby (1996) contends that deserves consideration in evaluating the gangster film genre is the “link between popular resistance and the gangster” (p. 113). As an example of this type of resistance, he pointed out that the Prohibition laws are portrayed as oppressive. Unlike the gangster genre, *The Untouchables* did not present Prohibition as oppressive; it was the law of the land and therefore deserved to be obeyed. Alcohol was personified and equated with evil, being referred to as Capone’s—or the name of the villain of the week—booze. In fact, when Ness and Anderson order cherries jubilee at a nightclub in the “Scarface Mob” (Monash, 1959), the alcohol used in their dessert is deliberately identified as being prewar, so as to not confuse it with “Capone Booze.”

Although Prohibition was not featured as an area of resistance, the series did attempt to expose “practical inadequacies in the culture’s sense of itself which might result from changed conditions in the world out-there, or from pressure within the culture for a reorientation in favor of a new ideological stance” (Fiske & Hartley, 1978, p. 88), through its dramatization of the role of women in society at that time. Both “Elegy” (Groves, 1962) and

“The Rusty Heller Story” (Kantor, 1960) question the function, and the role, of women in a male-dominated society. In “Elegy,” Barbara Stanwick plays the head of Chicago’s missing persons police bureau. Not only is she shown as an effective and professional police officer but she is also shown as a capable administrator, managing a staff of several male officers. Although the episode acknowledges that women can function in a superior manner in the workplace, it is ambiguous as to the proper job for a woman in that workplace. In the course of her attempts to locate a mobster’s missing daughter, Stanwick learns that the daughter had an affair and become pregnant. The young woman is abandoned by her lover and finds work as a singer in a speakeasy and subsequently loses custody of her child because she is working in an unsavory environment. Although Stanwick’s character is sympathetic toward the woman and contemptuous toward the young man, she admonishes the young woman to find a proper job and fight to regain custody of her child. The ambiguity concerning the proper function for a female is renewed in “The Rusty Heller Story.” In reviewing the program, *Variety* describes the plot in the following manner: “Leonard Kanter [the writer] told the story well of the wily speakeasy performer who, through her take-me-to-bed attitude, learns the secrets of two opposing gangs, turns them into a profit, and eventually dumps the intelligence into the lap of Eliot Ness” (Les, 1989). The review’s assessment of Rusty Heller’s (Elizabeth Montgomery) attitude is a little harsh. She is well aware of her attraction relative to the male population, relating to Ness that most men

look at her as if she were “a French postcard”; however, she projects an attitude of one attempting to control her environment rather than one who is submissive to the sexual desires of men. She is an intelligent woman who has the capacity to deal with the criminals on both their and her terms. By playing on their sexual desires and their perception that she is merely an attractive ornament, she is able to arrange a complicated series of double- crosses. This capacity is exhibited early in the episode when she manipulates Ness to her apartment after a raid on the speakeasy in order to call one gang boss and inform him of an assassination attempt while, at the same time, attempting to gain a promise of money for information from Ness. However, he rejects the notion that the government should pay for the truth. Heller is attracted to Ness because of his integrity and ethics, but primarily because of his “blue eyes.” Further, the institutions of marriage and the family were promoted as the only way for a woman to achieve true happiness. This situation is reemphasized near the end of the episode when Heller makes one more attempt to lure Ness. After informing Ness that she has information that will lead to the deportation of a gang boss and that she could use the information to heighten her status within the criminal community, she offers to exchange the information for a 48-hour tryst with Ness. Although Ness would like the information, he once again rejects Rusty’s advance. Whereas the criminals can easily be seduced and manipulated by Rusty Heller, Ness does not fall into her trap and remains loyal to his wife.

Although the series was willing to expose and challenge the myths surrounding the capacity of women in the workplace, it still acknowledged and supported the contention that women were better served by working in positions that are sanctioned by American society and not by those of the criminal class. Rusty Heller does receive redemption and acceptance through her violent death at the end of the episode. However, this redemption is limited because it underscores the notion that only unpleasant consequences will result if a woman becomes too close to male power.

The mechanism that the series elects “to convince the audience that their status and identity as individuals is guaranteed by the culture as a whole” (Fiske & Hartley, 1978, p. 88) was to contrast the lifestyles and actions of the criminals to that of the audience. This technique is effective because the messages “emerge as the conventions of seeing and knowing, the a priori assumption about the nature of reality which most of the time culture is content to leave unstated and unchallenged” (p. 87). In the episode “Ma Barker and Her Boys” (Ross, c. 1961), the early involvement of the Barker family with crime is directly linked to three factors. The first is Ma Barker’s (Claire Trevor) obsessive love for her sons and her desire to control every aspect of their lives. Secondly, the family includes a weak father figure, who even suffers physical abuse at the hands of his wife. The last factor in the early criminal involvement of the family members was their contempt for the church and for agents of authority. Ma not only ignores her minister’s advice

concerning her parenting practices, which have resulted in her sons' involvement with petty crime, but when confronted by a policeman, a member of her church, she is also shown lying on the Bible concerning her sons' whereabouts at the time when a crime was committed. Although on two different occasions the Barker residence features a plaque stating "Be it so humble, there's no place like home," the vast majority of the audience could not relate to any aspect of the Barker family's circumstance and certainly not to their subsequent actions.

*The Untouchables* transmitted "a sense of cultural membership—security and involvement" (Fiske & Hartley, 1978, p. 88)—by reinforcing the notion that the government and its agents, supported by the American middle-class values of hard work and integrity, were protecting the citizens of the country from crime also by linking many of the messages to the cold war, it implied that they were also supporting the American way of life. The viewers could feel secure in the knowledge that the agents of authority were working in their interest and that they shared a common value system.

#### The Warner Brothers Model of Television Production:

##### *77 Sunset Strip*

Jack Warner, the head of Warner Brothers, was one of the most vocal critics of the new television medium; however, by the mid-1950s he had come to realize that television was emerging as America's principal postwar cultural industry and that this growing trend toward integration of media industries

could benefit his operation. In fact, by the end of the decade his studio was still making a profit, even though in January 1959 the studio did not have a single movie in production. Warner developed a production model based on a mode of production that they understood—the studio system. Thus ABC afforded the studio the opportunity to maintain the contracts of their actors, directors, producers, and technicians and provided steady work and revenue for the studio. This arrangement also provided a guaranteed supply of products to the network (Anderson, 1994, p. 7) and allowed ABC to defray production costs and sell programming to advertisers (Baughman, 1990, pp. 91-113).

The concept behind *77 Sunset Strip* was to combine action and humor into a new detective program presentation, which, according to Marc (1984), was a departure from the previous television presentations of the detective genre (pp. 82-85). This is reflected in the 1958 review of the series pilot episode “Girl on the Run” in *Variety* which states:

Zimbalist [the actor playing the principal character] is something of an innovation among TV detectives. Here’s a private eye with a smooth approach who looks and sounds as if he’d recently graduated from Harvard. He’s a slightly superior type that figures things out before he acts, a glib talker who nevertheless doesn’t mind getting into a good scrap. There’s no question that Zimbalist creates a rather intriguing personality along offbeat lines and that could be the clue to a successful series. (Hift, 1958)

The formula for *77 Sunset Strip* was simple: It included handsome detectives, attractive women, a Hollywood-style nightclub, a glamorous and light-hearted tone in both the presentation and in the plots and, most importantly, sex and action (Toll, 1982). To this list some commentators have added dumb criminals and a number, like *77 Sunset Strip*, or *Surf Side 6* (Stempel, 1992, p. 67); a finger snapping jazz theme (Marc, 1984); a French switchboard operator; a street wise horse player; a sunbelt location (Marc & Thompson, 1992, pp. 146-147); and most importantly, programs that appealed to the youth audience (Baughman, 1990, pp. 91-113).

This formula made it necessary to create a new type of detective, a swinging Sherlock Holmes. This archetypal detective replaced the traditional hard-boiled sleuth. Anderson (1994) describes the back story of the main protagonist, Stu Bailey (Zimbalist), in the following terms:

Bailey holds a Ph.D. in Indo-European Languages, and . . . he would have been the youngest Ph.D. in the history of Columbia University had World War II not intervened. After serving in the OSS during the war, he tried to take a position in the hallowed halls of an Ivy League school but realized that he couldn't be happy in such cloistered surroundings. Thus he became a private detective. Although he is not surrounded by the attributes of wealth, Bailey is a seasoned traveler, a gourmet chef, a man of considerable worldliness. (p. 242)

Following the successful example of an earlier Warner Brothers television production, *Maverick*, and in an attempt to reduce the possibility of a popular star stopping production in a salary dispute—Clint Walker had done just that during the production of the studio’s first television success, *Cheyenne*—the producers added a second male lead and generally alternated their appearance from episode to episode. Roger Smith played Jeff Spenser, a partner in the detective agency. The Spenser character was also young and handsome, and, further, “like his partner, Jeff Spenser was educated, having worked his way through school to receive a law degree and ultimately, to work for the FBI” (Anderson, 1994, p. 243). Although these characters proved popular, the initial success of the program with the growing youth market was due to the introduction of a secondary character, the young, extremely cool parking attendant, Kookie (Edd Burnes). The series description registered with the Writers Guild describes the character of Rickey, soon to become Kookie during production, as being

a “real cool cat.” He’s hep but likable, and despite his ‘beat generation’ dialogue, he’s not a juvenile delinquent. Rickey [Kookie] is ambitious and sharp; he’d rather be a private-eye than anything else in the world. His role in the series should have definite appeal to teenagers. (Anderson, 1994, p. 243)

The fact of Kookie’s popularity can be seen in the rapid ascent of an Edd Burnes song, “Kookie, Kookie, Lend Me Your Comb”, to the fourth



position on the Billboard charts during the series' first year of broadcast (Marc & Thompson, 1992, pp. 146-147). The popularity of the series among young people was not lost on the advertisers. Pepsi-Cola launched its famous challenge to Coca-Cola on the series with the slogan "Now it's Pepsi for those who think young" (Anderson, 1994, p. 245). The studio also found television profitable. With the cost of only \$245,000 for a pilot movie and the average cost of a single episode low compared to the cost of an average B movie (Kisseloff, 1995, p. 293), as well as the revenue generated from license fees in excess of \$12.6 million for the studio's six prime-time presentations, Jack Warner called 1959—the year in which the studio had no movie productions in its schedule in January—the best year since 1953 (Anderson, 1994, p. 246).

The studio attempted to duplicate the success of *77 Sunset Strip* by producing several clones. The first imitator was *Hawaiian Eye*, which also featured two young and hip detectives, an off-beat supporting cast, and beautiful women located in an exotic setting (Norden, 1985, p. 39). This franchise was extended to Miami and New Orleans with the development of *Surfside Six* and *Bourbon Street Beat* respectively. Bermuda was considered as a future location for a detective series, but because the island had a predominantly Black population the concept was abandoned (Kisseloff, 1995, pp. 293-294). Warner Brothers did alter its basic formula somewhat by having characters from one series appear as guest stars on the other series (Norden,

1985, p. 39). It extended the sex angle on *Surfside Six* by having the principal characters constantly appearing in swimsuits (Kisseloff, 1995, p. 296).

*77 Sunset Strip* began to decline in popularity and in Fall, 1963 Jack Webb, took over the production of the series. Webb was the former star and producer of the popular *Dragnet* series and his conservative outlook on crime fighting dominated the series (Marc, 1984, p. 85). The format changed from single episodes to a five-part miniseries featuring Zimbalist in an espionage caper involving a shift of location to New York, foreign travel, anti-Communist attitudes, and art works stolen by the Nazi war machine during World War II. The protagonist took on the characteristics of the traditional hard-boiled detective, and the presentation had a film noir look. Gone were Kookie, the French switchboard operator, the playboy partner, the street-wise horse racing aficionado, and Dino's, the Hollywood restaurant. The office was moved off Sunset Boulevard to a drab downtown location, only to be replaced by New York City settings before the first commercial break of the first episode. The jazz theme was also replaced with a more somber, downbeat, tune (Marc & Thompson, 1992, pp. 146-147). This new type of program did not prove popular, and the series was canceled in February of 1964, with reruns featuring the original cast appearing throughout the remainder of the season (*77 Sunset Strip*, 1999).

Like *The Untouchables*, *77 Sunset Strip* was influenced by the cold war and committed to the protection of American institutions of authority. Unlike

*The Untouchables*, with the exception of the introductory portion of the second episode of a two-part presentation and the episodes produced by Jack Webb in the series final year, *77 Sunset Strip* does not use a formal narrator. Yet, within the structure of the program, a narrative pattern emerges that promotes certain characters' worldview over those of others who populate the story world of the series. Not only did the action flow to and from the detectives in the programs, but the detectives were also established as the principal source of information and knowledge in the series. Not only did their associates take direction from them, but in many cases other professionals deferred to their judgments. In "Penthouse on Skid Row" (W. Douglas, c. 1960) a police lieutenant realizes that one of the detectives is undercover and not only chooses not to diverge his identity, but also, because of his respect for the detective, acknowledges the correctness of his theory of the case, although the evidence supports a different interpretation. The fact that these detectives serve in a unique position as a repository of knowledge is demonstrated by the transformation of Kookie from a parking attendant to a detective. In "The Bridal Trail Caper" (Lester, c. 1960) the audience is treated to a new image of the young man. Not only is his language modified to reflect a more educated person but also he is infused with a new knowledge of chemistry, capable of performing a blood test and analyzing the results. These key characters, the detectives, become, in effect, the implied authors of the series. As Kozloff (1992) points out "The 'implied author' of a television show, like that of a novel, is not a flesh-and-blood

person but rather a textual construct, the viewer's sense of the organizing force behind the world of the show" (p. 78). It is through this organizing force that authority is projected through the narrative structure of the series. Although "this intangible narrative presence need not be thought of as a person, but rather as an agency, that which chooses, orders, presents, and thus *tells* the narrative before us" (p. 79), in the case of *77 Sunset Strip*, the agency is granted to a person—or in certain cases, when more than one detective appears in the same episode—persons.

One way the detectives' role as narrator was promoted was through their communications with the Kookie (Edd Burnes) character, who has a distinctive way of talking. Such examples as "That chick's the ginchiest," "Let's peel for this gig," and "I'm pilling on some Z's" (*77 Sunset Strip*, 1999) are interpreted for the audience when one of the detectives snaps his fingers or flashes another hand sign. Kookie's language was designed to appeal to a younger audience; however, the interpretation forced upon the character emphasizes the fact that only the detectives control legitimate forms of discourse. When, in 1961, Kookie becomes a partner, and his place as a parking attendant is taken by J.R. Hale (Robert Logan) who speaks in abbreviations (Rovin, 1977, p. 64), he gains new status in the series. As mentioned above, he demonstrates this new status in "The Bridal Trail Caper" (Lester, c. 1961) episode, in which he not only adopts a more mainstream form of communication, but also acquires a knowledge of chemistry.

However, to an even greater extent, the detectives' status as figures of authority was advanced through their back stories. The former professions of the detectives not only aid in the perception of their professionalism, but also legitimize the role of governmental security agencies in the world of the series and links the principal characters—especially Bailey, who worked for the OSS, the forerunner of the CIA—with American concerns regarding the cold war.

The influence of the cold war was also reflected in many of the story lines featured on *77 Sunset Strip*. One example was the “The Reluctant Spy” episode which, began the 1962 series. *Variety* described this presentation as

a good suspense story . . . [which] had [Efrem] Zimbalist, [Jr.] tapped by a femme friend (Lucy Norton) to sleuth the mysterious death of her husband in Vienna. . . [where] it was discovered that the ill-fated friend had been killed by Soviet agents for doing some voluntary espionage as an American spy. (Horo, 1989b).

However, most of the story lines that had elements of international intrigue were more implicit in their characterization of East-West relationships; in fact, they might be better characterized by the dichotomy of North-South relationships, dealing with situations focusing upon characters from emerging Latin American republics. This formula for determining story lines led one on-line review of the program to assert that a typical episode plot included “a plethora of curvaceous suspects [who] surround Bailey as he attempts to search for the murderous enemy of a Latin-American playboy” (*77 Sunset Strip*,

1999). What the review omitted is the fact that the Latin American playboy is pro-American, and by implication, that his enemies are also enemies of the American government. Although the generalized plot summary offered by the source is more likely the log line for the “A Nice Social Evening” (F. Brady, 1958) episode of the series—an episode that will be examined later in the context of the cultural images that the series projects—the pedantic nature of the series toward America’s southern neighbors is revealed. In this episode Bailey is retained to protect Valasquez (Ray Danton), the pro-American playboy, by the American government after he refuses more traditional governmental protection when informed of a potential threat against him. During the course of the program, the viewer learns that Valasquez does have some type of protection in the form of two tough though shallow-minded goons in the pay of his country’s strongman. Not only are the security and intelligence practices of the Latin American country called into question—the security agents do not know of the threat, and they actually prove an irritation, though a minor one, to Bailey’s effort to protect the playboy—but also the stability of the Latin American country’s political institutions appears to be a matter of concern. The implication of this episode is that the nation’s political framework is so fragile that only a cult of personality, provided by the heavy-handed techniques of the strongman and the popularity of Valasquez, could maintain the system.

The necessity of promoting pro-American strongmen in Central and South American was also the subject of “Return to San Dede ‘Capital City’” (Pittman, c. 1960). In this episode Bailey is hired to escort the daughter of the country’s deceased strongman to the capital city of the Latin American country in order to influence the election of his successor.

The projected superiority of American economic institutions quickly becomes evident, and comparisons between them and the economic practices of San Dede serve as comic relief throughout the program. While attempting to purchase a disguise for himself and his charge, Bailey reveals he has no local currency. Roxann (Andra Martin), the daughter, informs Bailey that his concerns are unfounded because American money can buy anything, anywhere. In another exchange the viewer learns that “junk” is the country’s leading industry, which must have been followed closely by the sale of straw hats if the number of such occurrences in the program is to be taken into consideration. The work ethic of the country’s population is also brought into question for the purpose of comedy. The country seems to shut down at 6:00 p.m. every day, and this includes its rather lazy and overweight police commandant, who is motivated only when his job is threatened.

The use of farce extends to the show’s portrayal of the country’s justice system. While interviewing several survivors of a train wreck designed to kill Roxann, the police detain a bullfighter, several of his friends, and a young girl. The bullfighter is innocent; however, he and his friends are celebrating his first

bullfight and are locked up, with their wine, and allowed to continue their celebration without further threat of police problems. The girl, who is also innocent, must remain in jail because she has no one to sign for her release—her aunt was injured in the train crash. Spenser, a noncitizen, is allowed to sign for her, implying that he is a responsible person, either by virtue of his status as an American or as a male, or both. After her release, Juanita follows Spenser around the room, a full step behind, like a puppy. This situation bothers the detective, but he is informed that he must cope with it, because not only is he now responsible for the young woman, but the only alternative is to place her back in jail. As a young woman, she cannot be allowed to walk the streets or stay alone in a hotel. Although presented in a light-hearted fashion, the overall picture of the population of San Dede is that of a simple, almost adolescent, group of people who need strong authoritative institutions to maintain their well-being and their morality. This characterization is reinforced by the reception that Roxann receives after she is rescued. Her claim to power rests on two suppositions. First, she is the daughter of the country's nation's former strongman, and second she was educated in the United States. Upon her rescue, Juanita is shown genuflecting before her and kissing her hand; Roxann quickly kneels to embrace the young woman, thus justifying this adulation. Further, upon her return to the capital city, the crowd in front of the presidential palace is shown cheering Roxann, and waving flags and flowers. If, as Curtin (1995) points out, the documentary television



production of the early 1960s can be seen as reflecting the foreign policy ambitions of the Kennedy State Department, then, certainly, this episode of *77 Sunset Strip* must be viewed as reflecting the John Foster Dullas State Department of the 1950s. It was during this time that America began to enter into alliances with many dictatorial third-world regimes in order to form what Dullas considered a bulwark against Communism.

Although, as Norden (1985) observes, the protagonists in *77 Sunset Strip* became the prototype for a new and glamorous private detective team, the image of the private detective/playboy was not new to television. The *Peter Gunn* series of the mid-1950s featured a single, suave, and sophisticated private investigator who, like the *77 Sunset Strip* team, tended to rescue beautiful young women in distress. However, unlike the characters in the later series, Gunn was involved in a monogamous, albeit not institutionalized, relationship with the implicit promise that marriage, at a latter date, was a distinct possibility. Although the series skirted the issue of marriage, it did acknowledge the value of a heterosexual, monogamous relationship and, within these parameters, began to legitimize the playboy image. These parameters were extended, although never dissolved, in the *77 Sunset Strip* series.

The extension of these boundaries was probably as much a product of economic considerations as an acknowledgment of a new social trend. During the inception of the detective genre in the 1950s, these programs found

themselves competing with the western for an audience, and the role of the hero became a means to differentiate the detective presentation. Initially the protagonists adopted the hard-boiled approach made familiar in the film genre (Toll, 1982, pp. 174-175). However, in the case of *77 Sunset Strip*, the producers borrowed from the competition. Warner Brothers had a hit in the western *Maverick*, which featured a group of roguish, single, and charming brothers, and in many cases the producers merely had the *Maverick* episodes rewritten to fit *77 Sunset Strip* (Marc & Thompson, 1992, pp. 141-151). The popularity of the characters in these two Warner Brothers programs parallels the popularity of two other subcultural development of the late 1950s and early 1960s: James Bond books and movies and the magazine *Playboy*. After President Kennedy revealed that one of his favorite authors was Ian Fleming, the creator of the Bond character, the spy became a cultural icon, especially for young males, representing a free and loose lifestyle, action and adventure, and a confident and successful attitude, all of which were somewhat alien and very much desired by most adolescent males. *Playboy* magazine “became the supreme sourcebook for a decisive image of masculine modernity. This image was built upon a belief that moral taboos and social barriers at long last could be abolished” (Stern & Stern, 1990, p. 35). However, unlike other subcultures that would develop during the late 1960s, the rise of the playboy did not reflect a rebellious attitude toward society in general, but rather a concern for upward mobility for young adults and reflected their desire to be modern (p. 36), catch

phrase to justify the male's desire to be promiscuous while avoiding traditional marriage. It was simply a restatement in contemporary terms of the sexist notion that a man should sow his wild oats while he was young. This nonrevolutionary attitude was expressed by *Playboy's* publisher and chief proponent of the new lifestyle, Hugh Hefner, in the following terms: "Our philosophy is that you should work hard and play hard, and strive to get into the sophisticated upper crust" (p. 35). Thus, the playboy became more concerned with style than with social concerns, except when those concerns could accentuate his image. In pursuit of this image, *Playboy* advised young males "to wear a satin smoking jacket, listen to winners of its annual jazz poll on large speakers, have an open mind abounding with literate, cultured, liberal thoughts, and smell of lime or leather-scented cologne" (p. 35). Although this social trend did not call for a total reassessment of American culture, it did provide a challenge to the contemporary norms of American society and opened a more general discussion of sexual behavior. Yet, in the early 1960s this discussion revolved more around style, and *77 Sunset Strip* was active in this discourse on style.

In discussing the subcultural groups that populated the era known as the sixties, Stern and Stern (1990), drawing from both *Playboy* and Bond, offered a rough checklist of those elements of style that comprised the playboy image. Through the overlaying of examples drawn from *77 Sunset Strip* upon

this list it is possible to examine how the series promoted both the style and the image of the playboy in American culture.

1. *The playboy strove to be well traveled, well dressed, and well groomed* (Stern & Stern, 1990, p. 36). *The playboy's cardinal rule is: NO WRINKLES!* (p. 48).

An example of this first axiom can be found in the “Juke Box Caper” (Earnshaw, c. 1960) episode of the series. Not only are the detectives suitably attired for their nocturnal excursions, but their work dress is also designed to conform to the playboy image. In one scene, Spencer is shown practicing his putting in his office without his suit coat. He is wearing a starched white shirt that falls toward the ground and reveals no wrinkles.

2. *Playboys dug jazz at midnight* (Stern & Stern, 1990, p. 36).

In both “A Nice Social Evening” (F. Brady, 1958) and “Six Superior Skirts” (Stuart, c. 1960) music and late social evenings play a part in establishing the story line. The audience is introduced to the Latin American playboy whom Bailey is hired to protect as he induces the band at Dino’s to play a jazz number with a Brazilian flair. This coupling of late-night partying and music continues throughout the episode, first in a montage depicting the Latin playboy, Bailey, and their female companions at several Los Angeles nightclubs and later at the ship of the playboy, where the episode culminates in an all night birthday party. In “Six Superior Skirts,” the audience is introduced to “Warner Brothers recordings stars,” the Mary Kay Trio, who perform songs

of a beat/folk/adult contemporary quality, for example, a more modernized version of the classic “Just One of Those Things.” Although the group fits into the action of the episode, which takes place at a benefit, their performance appears to be motivated more to sell records than to advance the story line. Time is taken to allow them to perform two complete songs, the second of which contains a running commentary by Kookie which serves to authorize their popularity among young people. The linkage of the series to its youthful audience is also advanced through its title song.

Although Bailey appears knowable, and comfortable with the playboy lifestyle, at several times he expresses his desire to limit his late-night experiences and opt for a good night’s sleep. This reinforces the concept that even the playboy lifestyle must be conditioned and operate within certain parameters.

3. *The most powerful weapon of seduction is the playboy’s pad (Stern & Stern, 1990, p. 50).*

In “A Nice Social Evening” (F. Brady, 1958) the viewers are introduced to Bailey’s “playboy pad.” His apartment is located in an upscale Los Angeles high-rise. The living room contains a fireplace with a sculpture on the mantle. The furniture is contemporary-modern, and there are examples of modern art on the walls. The lighting fixtures on the wall are candle-like. The doors leading out of the room feature raised colored panels, giving them a nontraditional appearance. This room could have appeared in the pages of

*Playboy* and stands in direct contrast to Bailey's bedroom, which appears several scenes later. Although the camera focuses only on Bailey's bed and the telephone next to it, there are no pictures over the bed, and the general atmosphere of the room is stark. This dissociation between Bailey's bedroom and his playboy image parallels the distance the episode places between the strenuous nightlife enjoyed by Bailey, Valasquez, and the women and any hint that a sexual encounter results from those nightly parties. Except for the final sequence, which produces the engagement of Valasquez and Marilyn (Arlene Howell), the final encounter of the evening between the foursome emphasizes that all will return to their respective living quarters alone. Once again the playboy lifestyle is limited and, more importantly, the institution of marriage is promoted as the only correct vehicle for sexual liaison.

4. *Cigarettes are déclassé. Perfumed pipe tobacco is the connoisseur's choice (Stern & Stern, 1990, p. 48).*

Although viewers are unable to discern the aroma of Bailey's pipe tobacco in the "Six Superior Skirts" (Stuart, c. 1960) episode, they are presented with the image of Bailey smoking a pipe in contrast to the other characters who, if they smoke, prefer cigarettes. The inclusion of the pipe-smoking sequence not only conforms to the playboy image, but reinforces the notion that Bailey is also a cerebral detective.

5. *[The playboy] never, under any circumstances whatsoever, lost composure (Stern & Stern, 1990, p. 36).*

In the same episode, Bailey remains calm when it is discovered that a famous and expensive jewel has been switched during the benefit. Once again, his demeanor is contrasted with those around him; while they are apprehensive and uncertain, Bailey's attitude is designed to inspire confidence and admiration from the audience.

Two additional elements of the playboy image should be mentioned in the context of these episodes and the series in general. First, the series takes place near an area associated with glamour and opulent lifestyles—Hollywood, California. The second element used to promote the playboy nature of the protagonist is the use of the convertible as the primary source of transportation. All of the above elements contributed to the playboy image and also served to link the series to the desires of their youthful male audience. This formula— young, handsome, cerebral detectives and glamorous settings—along with the inclusion of the Kookie character, was intended to appeal to younger females (Baughman, 1990, pp. 91-113).

Although, according to Lichter, Lichter and Rothman (1991) the series introduced women into the workplace (pp. 59-60), its general treatment of women was as pedantic as its treatment of developing countries. Female agency, as depicted in this series, was limited. This is not to say that the tensions that developed because of the changing roles of men and women were not reflected in the series. In “Juke Box Caper” (Earnshaw, c. 1960) Spencer is retained to investigate the suspicious suicide of an up-and-coming singer. In

the course of his investigation, Spencer visits the singer's sister and encounters her street-wise independent roommate, Linda (Lisa Davis). Not only is the roommate knowledgeable about the dark side of the record business and the circumstances surrounding the singer's death, but she also projects an indifferent attitude toward the allure of the male playboy. While discussing elements of the investigation, Spencer takes the opportunity to place himself within inches of her on the couch. He further extenuates the physical nature of this encounter by repeatedly moving toward her face as he reaches over her to deposit his cigarette ashes in an unseen ashtray. With every advance, Linda shifts her body and turns her face away from Spencer in a visual effort to negate his advances. This response might more correctly reflect the sensitivity of director Ida Lupino than the story line of the episode, as Linda ends up with Spencer—after he becomes involved with another woman—at the end of the program. However, for the most part, women assume the position of a damsel in distress, who require intervention by the detective in order to be rescued from their individual dilemmas. Further, there was an implied, and in some cases stated, assumption that the woman's role in the playboy fantasy was to tame the young man's lust and point him in the direction of marriage. This assumption forms part of the story line in "A Nice Social Evening" (F. Brady, 1958). In this episode, Bailey is retained by the American government, to protect a Latin American playboy while he is in the United States. In order to ingratiate himself to the playboy, Bailey enters a nightclub accompanied by two



beautiful women. After appraising the situation, and assuming that coupling is the natural course of any human relationship, Valasquez (Ray Danton)—the playboy—invites Bailey’s group to join him. In the course of the evening the predicted coupling occurs, with Valasquez demonstrating a preference for Marilyn (Arlene Howell). The week-long round of clubbing culminates with a birthday party aboard Valasquez’s ship. Here, Bailey, Spencer, and Kookie save the playboy’s life, and Marilyn induces a proposal of marriage from him.

### Conclusion

This chapter has focused upon two police/detective programs which aired in the early 1960s, *The Untouchables* and *77 Sunset Strip*. Although these series differed in their production design, time setting, and characterization, they both reflected the dominant social, political, and economic ideologies of the early 1960s.

*The Untouchables* reflected the tensions of the cold war and the fear of Communism felt by the majority of Americans. The series is linked to this anti-Communist feeling through several narrative devices, some obvious and others subtle. On the obvious side, there is the use of radio personality Walter Winchell as the narrator. Winchell was seen as having knowledge of the working and history of the mob, and he was associated with anti-Communism, having been active in disclosing perceived Communists in the entertainment industry. Because of these two associations, Winchell’s narration could have a double meaning. When he warned the viewers of the evils threatening America

he could be warning the public about the internal threat of Communism as well as that of organized crime. On a more subtle level, the viewer could draw a parallel between the Stalin-like character of the typical mob boss, and the collective ruling system of the mob resembling the Soviet Politburo. Because of the linkage, the viewing public could easily associate both organized crime and the Soviet state with violence. The series not only acknowledged the existence of the cold war but also emphasized the superiority of American values. *The Untouchables* performed this function through its characterization of the Treasury agents. They were moralists who not only wanted to protect the American public, but they also detested America's enemies. They not only represented the government, they also personified American values. Winchell described the untouchables as men of integrity, referring to them as "six or seven honest men." This characterization is contrasted with that of the gangsters who resort to violence to achieve their goals. Thus the agents of the government are contrasted with the agents representing violence and cohesion. Viewers could take comfort in the knowledge that the agents of authority were working in their interest because of dedication to a commonly shared value system.

Like *The Untouchables*, other police/detective programs would continue to reflect concerns about cold war issues, although redefined in terms of America's Asian involvement in Vietnam, throughout the remainder of the 1960s.

*77 Sunset Strip* also focused on issues of authority and the protection of the American political and economic system. The worldview of the principal detectives served as the primary vehicle for establishing cultural values. The detectives were the main source of information and knowledge in the series. Although the detectives were associated with the playboy lifestyle, they were also seen as authority figures, and the later image was advanced through their back stories. One member of the team was a former college professor and worked for the Office of Strategic Services during World War II. The second detective had also worked for the government before becoming a private detective (Norden, 1985, p. 33). These back stories served to legitimize the role of governmental security agencies, and link the series with the public's concern about the cold war.

As indicated above, these detectives came to represent practitioners of the new and glamorous playboy lifestyle that was becoming popular during the early part of the 1960s. The popularity of James Bond books and movies and *Playboy* magazine among young American males contributed to glamour of the playboy image. Bond was seen as having a free and loose lifestyle that combined action with a confident attitude that not allowed succeed as a spy, but also with women. *Playboy* magazine argued that "moral taboos and social barriers at long last could be abolished" (Stern & Stern, 1990, p. 35), and a new modern man could emerge. The playboy did challenge contemporary norms, but he was still dedicated to most of the values of American society,

especially those associated with traditional male oriented practices. For many males the playboy lifestyle was merely an extension of the gender double standard they were exposed to in adolescence. For the playboy, issues of style were more important than political issues, and *77 Sunset Strip* was active in reflecting those issues of style.

Although *77 Sunset Strip* did portray the playboy lifestyle as a new subculture of the late 1950s, early 1960s American society, it was a more limited and sanitized fashion than its chief proponent, *Playboy* magazine, would have sanctioned. The series, at least under the direction of Lupino, also presented the tensions and discomfort that were beginning to surface in the female conscience regarding their sexual as well as professional roles within American society. Interestingly, the tensions reflected in the Lupino episode would find more resonance in society than the image of the playboy that the series promoted, and the fashionableness of the playboy subculture began to diminish later in the decade.

As the sexual revolution that *Playboy* forecast and promoted gathered momentum, a sad thing happened. Playboys, with all their seductive rigmarole—their knife-creased slacks and shaken-not-stirred martinis and revolving beds and flaming gourmet cherries jubilee—were left behind. They got stranded in the early sixties! (Stein & Stein, 1990, p. 56)

However, on television, reflecting the popularity of the James Bond character, the playboy image and the creation of Bond-inspired protagonists would continue throughout the decade.

During the remainder of the 1960s other programs would reflect a changing direction in the lifestyles of many Americans; however, like 77 *Sunset Strip*, these programs would also stress the maintenance of traditional—white, male, middle-class—values.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE POLICE BECOME THE BLUE MEANIES:

#### *BATMAN, DRAGNET, AND CAMP IN THE MID-1960S*

We all live in our yellow submarine,  
Yellow submarine, yellow submarine

And our friends are all on board  
Many more of them live next door  
And the band begins to play

—John Lennon and Paul McCartney, “Yellow Submarine”

By the mid-1960s, many American youth were following the Beatles onto their “yellow submarine” and beginning to embrace a new lifestyle whose hallmark was the rejection of the economic and social values of their parents. During the same period, the television industry also began to react to the development of this new lifestyle, and in 1966, the networks introduced two such crime programs, and both received top-20 ratings.

One program was *Dragnet*, a sequel to the popular 1950s crime drama. This show featured a nostalgic look at a world in which traditional values prevailed and the authority of the police was used to protect those values. Although promoting the same messages as *Dragnet*—good still prevailed over evil—the second show, *Batman*, differed in style and was designed to appeal to the youth market. The American audience was conditioned to accept the

serious policeman and the hard-boiled detective as representatives of two professions whose goals were to protect the public and insure that criminal activity was hampered, if not eliminated. While these heroes could trace their origins from the detective novel and film noir, the *Batman* series owed its beginning to comic books, and it approached the audience with a super hero who performed his tasks as if he were visually transported from the pages of those magazines. In fact, the initial appeal of the series for the youth audience was the result of a massive publicity campaign that positioned the audience so that they could accept a nontraditional format. The development of this approach is credited to producer William Dozier, who when first assigned the project, related the following:

I was taken aback, *Batman* was simply not in my ken. But ABC had bought the concept without any idea of what to do with it. So I bought a dozen comic books and felt like a fool doing it. I read them—if that is the word—and asked myself what do I do with *this*? Then I hit on the idea of camping it. (Rovin, 1977, p. 100)

This chapter presents the argument that it was the introduction of camp into the format of *Batman* that differentiated it from most shows in the genre and accounted for its popularity with many members of the youth audience. The purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, it examines *Batman* and the emergence of camp in the program as a vehicle to promote traditional values while at the same time making the program acceptable to a youth audience.

Secondly, this chapter explores the use of camp as a tool for forming an alternative reading of the text. Building on the discussion of *Batman*, the chapter focuses on *Dragnet* and further examines how the application of camp could have aided the youth audience of the mid-1960s in formulating a set of messages different from those sought by the series producer. However, before such an evaluation, it is necessary to establish some of the trends that led to the acceptance of a need to promote alternative views of traditional American society and how that society's institutions of authority came to be questioned. It is also necessary briefly to examine the concept of camp as a mechanism for both opposition and identification.

In many respects, the youth movement of the 1960s was a result of the post-war baby boom of the late 1940s, which produced some 76 million new births in the United States. By the 1960s, the sheer number of young people in the country was influencing the development of new products, and industries, both in the economic sphere and in the way they were advertised in the media. Although the majority of American youth did not participate in political demonstrations or totally accept an alternative lifestyle, they did embrace many of the stylistic elements, such as the long hair, the clothing, and the music associated with the more flamboyant members of their generation. The combination of these two elements—a larger population of youth, making even a small minority appear larger than their percentages might justify, and the acceptance of a type of youth uniform that made most young people blend



together—forced attention to what became known as the youth movement, the counterculture, and/or the subculture..

The new styles associated with young people were in many ways a reaction to the environment in which they grew up during the 1950s. The one consistent message promoted during the 1950s was that nonconformity was dangerous, and this new subculture appeared to reject conformity. For their parents this represented a threat to dominant morals, manners, and values. They had survived the Depression, and a world war, and although they were now experiencing a period of post-war prosperity, they were unsure about how long this prosperity would last. Further, most White parents embraced the values of pre-war America and turned inward toward their families. This concern for family led many Whites away from the racially mixed cities and into the suburbs, where they felt that a more wholesome environment existed for their children. New homes, new schools and the new technology of television helped to create an atmosphere of prosperity in which young people were free from worries about money and, were therefore supposedly happy (Ardman, 1995).

This return to an older vision of America was reflected on television as well. The characters in the domestic comedy *Ozzie and Harriet* (1952-1966) were presented as the ideal American family and represented the dominant family myth of the period. The program featured a set of bland White middle-class values and rules which, if followed, would show young people how they

should behave. These rules exhorted the young to obey authority; control their emotions; fit in with the group; not even to think about sex; and look like little adults. Ducktails and other nontraditional affectations were reserved for juvenile delinquents. Moreover, the boys were expected to grow up to be like Ozzie Nelson, and the girls were taught to be like their mothers and become housewives. Their proper professions could be teachers, nurses, flight attendants, or secretaries; however, their number-one goal was to find a husband (Ardman, 1995).

As alluring as the typical *Father Knows Best* (1954-1962) television family might have been for the nation's parents, other events of the decade were causing rifts in this idealized vision. Through the television program *The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis* (1959-1963), which focused on the adventures of an adolescent male, the youth audience became aware of a new subculture, the Beatniks, who thrived on poetry and music and cultivated an artistic sensibility. They also saw a number of adults on the television news calling for a ban on certain books in their schools and reacted by secretly obtaining and reading such books as *The Catcher in the Rye*, only to find that these books were not as *bad* as they were led to believe and in many cases addressed elements of the teenage angst that they were experiencing. Then there was rock 'n' roll, which would not only provide young people with a vehicle for group identification, but would also, to their parents' horror, provide them with a tool for breaking the existing limits of politeness. Such artists as Little Richard introduced Black

music into White middle-class culture. However, the most dangerous musical artist of the time was Elvis Presley, whose mannerisms and reliance on forms of Black music represented the first signs of a White youth rebellion: the dismissal of the notion of conformity and the acceptance of artifacts from another culture (Ardman, 1995).

For many American parents, the advent of rock 'n' roll reminded them of the lessons of the blacklisting period of the early 1950s, when it was argued that Communists were interested in controlling America's music and movie industries. However, these concerns did not resonate with many young people. Not only was the government sponsored "duck and cover" method for survival of a nuclear attack becoming exposed as useless and a public lie, but also the idea that all Americans were treated equally was beginning to be questioned. Television news reported the incidents in Little Rock, where Black children were accepted into the White school system only through a court order and a military presence. Television was helping America's White youth become aware of racial segregation and the necessity for the civil rights movement.

As the United States moved into the 1960s, many young people also began to question the relevance of the education they were receiving in American universities. Although framed in political terms, the free speech movement—the campus movement originating in California that grew out of student concerns about their educational process—was accepted by many young people as a shift in focus away from traditional education to a concern

for quality-of-life issues. Also during this period many young people began to question traditional notions about love and marriage. The advent of the birth control pill in 1960 not only allowed this generation a new license to experience sex, but also initiated a debate concerning the legitimacy of traditional sexual codes. Therefore, questions were raised concerning the makeup of an ideal America society and the place that many young people wanted to hold in that society. By the mid-1960s these questions began to focus on the concept of authority: parental, institutional, and, increasingly, political. The agents of this authority also came under question, especially the military and police. The remainder of this chapter examines (a) how two television programs of the mid-1960s responded to the challenges posed by the youth movement's disdain for institutions of political authority and (b) how camp was used as a tool to both modify these challenges by the medium and act as a tool to negotiate an oppositional reading by those making the challenge.

### Camp and the Youth Subculture

To understand how camp became a vehicle for many young people in the 1960s to express their dissatisfaction with elements of American society and how they used it as a tool to differentiate themselves from other members of society, it is helpful to turn first to Sontag (1966), who asserts that "Camp is esoteric—sometimes a private code, a badge of identity even, among small urban cliques" (p. 275) and to Hebdige (1979), who offers an analysis of the nature of subcultures. This examination begins with the recognition that the

dominant ideology—the communication of the world view of society’s ruling class—lies beneath individual consciousness. It becomes “normal common sense”:

All human societies *reproduce* themselves this way through a process of “naturalization.” It is through this process--a kind of inevitable reflex of all social life--the *particular* sets of social relations, *particular* ways of organizing the world appear to us as if they were universal and timeless. (Hebdige, 1979, p. 14)

This process of hegemony requires the consent of the subordinate groups, not only on an ideological level but on a functional level, for consensus to be achieved. Consciousness building implies conflict resolution, or what Gramsci has termed ““moving equilibrium”” (Hall, Clarke, Jefferson, & Roberts, 1976). In other words, “forms cannot be permanently normalized. They can always be deconstructed” (Hebdige, 1979, p. 16), and likewise can be reconstructed and re-mystified by new alliances. This process of reconstructing meaning can also be applied to commodities, a category into which, owing to its mode and motivation of production, media texts fall.

Moreover commodities can be symbolically “reposed” in everyday life, and endowed with implicitly oppositional meanings, by the very groups who originally produced them. The symbiosis in which ideology and social order, production and reproduction, are linked is then neither fixed nor guaranteed. It can be pried open. The consensus can be

fractured, challenged, over-ruled, and resistance to the groups in dominance cannot always be lightly dismissed or automatically incorporated. (Hebdige, 1979, pp. 16-17)

Therefore, as Barthes (1972) points out, even the mundane aspects of everyday life, clothing, dance, and music, for example, convey meaning, and it is through the development of subculture *style* that conflict can exist with the greater, more dominant culture.

Hebdige (1979) states “The emergence of such groups [youth subcultures] has signaled in a spectacular fashion the breakdown of consensus in the post-war period” (p.17). But these youth subcultures do not directly challenge the world view of the dominant culture. “Rather it is expressed obliquely, in style. The objections are lodged, the contradictions displayed (and . . . ‘magically resolved’) at the profoundly superficial level of appearances: that is, at the level of signs” (p.17). The conflict between the dominant culture and these subcultures occurs on this level--it is “a struggle for possession of the sign which extends to even the most mundane areas of everyday life” (p. 17). Hebdige summarizes the role of style:

Style in subculture is, then, pregnant with significance. Its transformations go “against nature,” interrupting the process of “normalization.” As such, they are gestures, movements toward a speech which offends the “silent majority,” which challenges the

principle of unity and cohesion, which contradicts the myth of consensus. (p.18)

It is through the production of style that camp can become an effective mechanism for creating identity within a subculture, because as Sontag (1966) points out, “Camp is a certain mode of aestheticism. It is one way of seeing the world as an aesthetic phenomenon. . . . not in terms of beauty, but in terms of the degree of artifice, of stylization” (p. 277), or, in other words, for camp “style is everything” (p. 288). In what Meyer (1994) calls an article that “propelled [camp] into public consciousness” (p. 7), Susan Sontag notes 58 observations concerning the nature of camp, the first of which is the quotation cited above. In summary, the key elements in Sontag’s interpretation of camp’s stylistic conditions included the emphasis of style over content, artifice, the love of extravagance and the exaggerated, the use of double interpretation of signs and actions, the promotion of things that are serious yet fail, the glorification of “character,” and the refutation of both traditional seriousness and extreme states of feeling. According to Sontag, camp has become a method of enjoyment for its practitioners, who have developed a system for defining the “good taste of bad taste” (p. 291).

Camp, as a form of expression, would seem to fit perfectly into a world populated by the youth of the mid-1960s, who valued style over everything else. Long hair had become a necessity for most young males after the Beatles made their first appearance on American television in 1964. The next year, the

appearance of young females became equally unconventional, with the introduction of the miniskirt. As the decade progressed, the nonconformist nature of youth fashion style, both exaggerated and extravagant, would remain a hallmark of the youth movement. In many ways, this style was camp itself. Not only did this new appearance celebrate artifice and the love of extravagance and exaggeration—as Sontag (1966) points out: “camp responds particularly to the markedly attenuated and to the strongly exaggerated” (p. 279)—it also glorified the “character,” or at least the individual member of the youth subculture, through its refutation of traditional attire and the notion that such serious affectations would produce successful members of American society.

Further, camp could appeal to the sensitivities of this generation. Camp frees its practitioner from the confinement imposed by the aesthetic demands of high art, thus allowing for pleasure to be taken in the arts of the masses—an ethical consideration of many members of the youth subculture. Camp also allowed for a metaphorical “thumbing of the nose” at traditional notions of decorum because “the lover of Camp appreciates vulgarity” (p. 289). Yet, the most telling linkage between camp and the youth subculture of the time, is expressed by Sontag’s observation concerning the relationship between camp’s adherents and the economic condition of their society. She states that “camp taste is by its nature possible only in affluent societies, in societies or circles capable of experiencing the psychopathology of affluence” (p. 289). The youth



subculture was “experiencing the psychopathology of affluence,” and it could be argued, that in many ways the events which framed the 1960s—drug usage, adoption of a more liberal sexual code, adoption of a nontraditional dress code, and even political action—were a reaction to boredom brought on by affluence. For whatever reason, the youth subculture could identify with camp and use its form as a method to differentiate itself from other members of American culture.

Further, camp’s use of the double interpretation of signs and actions could provide the subculture with a tool for exploring and establishing an oppositional meaning to those then projected in the 1960s media. Meyer (1994) asserts that “Camp is political” (p. 1). Although Meyer also contends that “camp is solely a queer (and/or sometimes gay and lesbian) discourse” (p. 1), his assertion remains valid for it is the political nature of both the youth subculture’s style and camp that links them and offers a tool for making an oppositional reading of media texts.

To clarify the term “oppositional reading,” it is helpful to turn to Hall (1980), who outlined a theoretical account of how media texts are received and evaluated by their viewers. He argued that the producers of media texts present a world view in their programs that corresponds to the attitudes of the dominant ideology of the society and as such serves as a vehicle for promotion and maintenance of that ideology. In terms of the crime genre of the 1960s these promotion and maintenance functions revolve around society’s need to

maintain authority to preserve the dominate ideology and the presentation of the agents of that authority.

Hall (1980) further asserts that some viewers whose class position allows for identification with that dominate ideology would produce a dominant reading of the media text; in other words, they would accept the preferred meaning of the producers of the text. Other viewers, whose class does not allow for identification with the dominant ideology, find themselves in opposition to both the ideology and the media text. However, the majority of viewers fall within neither of these groups. They “accept the dominant ideology in general, but modify or inflect it to meet the needs of their specific situation” (Fiske, 1987, p. 64). These viewers, according to Hall, produce a negotiated reading of the program’s text. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to the examination of the two programs that have come to be associated with camp during the 1960s, with emphasis on how their texts promoted authority and how the fledging youth movement used camp as a strategy to decode the texts, producing a negotiated reading which strongly opposed the preferred reading.

### *Batman* and the Introduction of Camp

“By anyone’s standard of measure, 1966 was *the* year for the television hero. More specifically, it was The Year that Batman Built” (Rovin, 1977, p. 99). The technique that accounted for the successful transition of this comic book hero into another medium was camp. Executive producer William

Dozier's concept was simple; he would model the series after the old movie serial, in which the actors played their parts in a serious manner reflecting on the serious nature of the task that they were called upon to perform. The hero of these serials was usually accompanied by a sidekick who served as a counterpoint to the hero and at times offered comic relief. In the *Batman* series the heroes would also be portrayed as serious people, so much so that they would be completely devoid of humor, and their sidekick, the butler, would not only be shown as competent but also equally humorless. It was hoped that humor could be achieved through a juxtaposition of a pair of heroes dressed in unrealistic costumes and confronting improbable problems in a totally serious and humorless manner. The series also retained the traditional cliffhanger format of the movie serials, with the first segment of the biweekly episode ending with Batman (Adam West) and Robin (Burt Ward) facing a deadly trap from which they would escape at the beginning of the second segment.

Dozier embellished the show's serial format, including the use of recurring sight gags, such as the labeling of almost every piece of equipment and many rooms with a sign, the depiction of the heroes climbing walls as if they were walking up them, and the inclusion of the cartoon-like "BIFF" and "POW" titles during the fight sequences. The series also featured a weekly guest star playing the villain. According to Rovin (1977), "once the series had become an overnight sensation, playing an evildoer on *Batman* was a status symbol in Hollywood" (p. 100). The list of guest villains included Otto

Preminger, David Wayne, Liberace, George Sanders, Eli Wallach, Victor Buono, Vincent Price, Milton Berle, Tallulah Bankhead, and Ethel Merman, with reoccurring appearances by Frank Gorshin as the Riddler, Cesar Romero as the Joker, Burgess Meredith as the Penguin, and Julie Newmar, Lee Meriwether, and Eartha Kitt as the Catwoman (McNeil, 1991, p. 73; Rovin, 1977, p. 100).

It might appear that camp would be a perfect vehicle for the presentation of visual comedy. As one on-line commentator observed, “they [the creators] added a campy feel to the show so it would appeal to both kids and adults” (“History of 1966 *Batman*, 2000). They hoped that young people would love the BAM! POW! inserts and the bright colors, while adults would be attracted by the appearances of the special guest villains.

However, as it turned out, this seemingly natural fit between television comedy and camp was not as natural as expected. During a pre-premiere showing of the series in a selected movie theater, Vane and Gross (1994) cited an unnamed ABC program executive as stating,

The theater audience was puzzled about what they were looking at.

Was it a comedy, an adventure, a combination of both, or what? So we ordered a second test and had the moderator come out before the screening to tell them it was a put-on. The second score was very good.

We changed all our promos overnight to stress that the shows were fun.

The spots positioned the audience properly and we had an instant hit.

(p. 104)

These promotions featured the slogan, “Batman is coming. So is Robin” (Goldenson, 1991, p. 246), and they appeared in unconventional as well as conventional media. Goldenson cited Edgar Scherick, a series insider, in explaining the unconventional media that was used in advertising the program:

In that era, most program promotion was done on the network itself.

But *Batman* was so different it lent itself to unique promotional techniques. We brought ads in newspapers, we put up posters. We tried to exploit every medium possible. (p. 246)

The media campaign worked. “The show had been played up, and much of the public wanted to see it just because of all the hype—who would want to miss something that your friends were going to be talking about at school the next day?” (History of 1966 *Batman*, 2000). However, although the series was an overnight success, its popularity was not sustainable, and even by the end of the first season, the show was losing ratings points. During the next season the program introduced a new character, Batgirl, in an attempt to regain the public’s interest. However, this technique failed and the program’s twice-weekly format was reduced to once a week, and eventually canceled altogether.

Two questions remain when discussing *Batman* as it appeared in the mid-1960s. First, how did it use camp to find its audience, and, second, how effective was camp in maintaining this audience? The first of these questions

can be answered by comparing the attributes of camp as described by Sontag (1966) to the techniques used in the series. The second question is not so easy, although on the surface it would appear so. However, given the short run of the program and the moderate success of *The Green Hornet* series, which was made by the same producers of *Batman* and did not use elements of camp (Harmon, 1992, p. 48), it would seem that camp was not a successful vehicle for police and detective fiction. As with many evident conclusions, however, there is more to be understood than merely that which is on the surface. The remainder of this section examines these two questions, beginning with the series' use of camp.

Sontag (1966) asserts that “the hallmark of Camp is the spirit of extravagance” (p. 283), and she described camp’s love of the exaggerated as “the ‘off,’ of things-being-what-they-are-not” (p. 279). The series has many examples of objects and actions being portrayed in this “off” position. One example of actions “being-what-they-are-not” can be found in the attempts of the heroes to scale a building in the episode “Its How You Play the Game” (Ross, c. 1967b), part of the “Come Back Shame” set of programs. Not only are the heroes shown walking up a wall as if they were walking on level ground, but their advance is interrupted by the appearance of Werner Klemperer, in character as Colonel Wilhelm Klink from the *Hogan’s Heroes* (1965-1971) series. This appearance adds nothing to the plot of the story and seems out of place considering that the episode is concerned with a western-

style villain. However, in the world of the *Batman* series, the unexpected becomes the expected, and the disjointed becomes the reality, resting in the “off” position. Another example of extravagance as evidenced by the series is the choice of names for the secondary members of the villain’s gang. In the episode mentioned above, the members of the western villain’s gang are Mosey James (Timothy Scott), Okie Annie (Joan Staley)—plays on western folk heroes—and Rip Snorting (John Michlim)—a play on a phrase associated with B western films. Another example of extravagance and excess in the series is the use of an atomic reactor to power Batman’s car, his main frame computer, and the other anti-crime devices in the Bat Cave in the episode “The Purr-fect Crime” (Ross & Orgel, 1967b).

The *Batman* series extends Sontag’s (1966) claim that “camp sees everything in quotation marks” (p. 280) by ignoring the formality of the quotation mark itself. The series labels almost everything from anti-crime devices to the Bat phone to a “Trap Door” in the “Black Widow Strikes Again” (Mintz, c. 1967a) episode.

Another attribute of camp, according to Sontag (1966) is its “glorification of character” (p. 285). She maintained that “what Camp taste responds to is “instant character” . . . a person being one, very intense thing. . . . This attitude toward character is a key element of the theatricalization of experience embodied in the Camp sensibility” (p. 286). Although both Batman and Robin are glorified in the series, the use of the guest villain provided for

the creation of “instant character.” One example of such an instant character is Catwoman, who not only assumed the excessive persona of a sex kitten but also took on certain physical mannerisms of a feline, as can be seen in Julie Newmar’s characterization of the part, in the episode “The Purr-fect Crime” (Ross & Orgel, 1967b). Like her other performances in this role, “Newmar relished her comic portrayal of the villainess, brings her dancer’s grace to the feline character. Her physical movements and the sounds she makes are subtly catlike” (Kulzer, 1992, pp. 87-88). In this episode, the association is extended, as the villain is shown flicking a cat-o’-nine tails while discussing her impending crime. The costumes of both the heroes and the villains also contribute to their glorification and the theatricality in the series. Almost every villain and, in most cases, their associates can best be described as “over the top.” One simple example of such costuming appears in “The Ring of Wax” (Paritz & Rodgers, c. 1967b) episode featuring Frank Gorshin as the Riddler. The Riddler wears a green body suit with a black question mark on his chest; he is further attired with a lavender mask, gloves, and sash. One of his male associates is clad in an orange shirt with gray stripes and a red hat. The other male gang member is shown in a blue shirt with the same gray stripes and a blue hat. The female member wears a purple body suit with violet stripes and a purple cape. This attention to costumes is extended at one point in the episode when the Riddler suggests that the gang change back to these outfits after they



perform the first stage of their caper wearing equally outlandish street clothes so as not to draw attention to themselves.

According to Sontag (1966), “Camp refuses both the harmonies of traditional seriousness, and the risks of fully identifying with extreme states of feeling” (p. 287). Outside the world of *Batman*, it would be hard to take a crime fighter attired like Batman seriously. Further, the series avoids demonstrating extreme feelings. The relationship between Catwoman and Batman is one example of how these feelings are negotiated. In the “The Purr-fect Crime” (Ross & Orgel, 1967b) “there’s no question the Catwoman had a thing for Batman” (Kulzer, 1992, pp. 89), and Batman is equally attracted to her. However, as Catwoman appears to fall to her death at the conclusion of the episode, Batman seems sad but stoic, accepting her demise as a product of her criminal intentions. This stoicism is somewhat mitigated by the knowledge that she is Catwoman and has nine lives.

Sontag (1966) maintains that “the relation of Camp taste to the past is extremely sentimental” (p. 280) and, in many cases, *Batman* conveys this sentimentality. The “Come Back, Shame” episodes (Ross, c. 1967a) offer an example of how nostalgia is venerated. Although these episodes seem to be a satire of the western films of the 1930s and 1940s, with a young boy calling for his hero, Shame, to return, as in the movie *Shane* and a standoff between Shame and Batman similar to that shown in *High Noon*, the overall tone of these presentations is more in the nature of paying homage to those traditional

films than in making fun of them. This tone is reinforced as the young boy, Andy (Eric Shea), decides to “trade in his cowboy outfit” and abandon his adulation of Shame in favor of the traditional values of the western hero as expressed, in these episodes, by Batman. This reliance on traditional values provides the underpinning for the series and reinforces its basic concept that submission to society’s authority and the authority of its elite, the professional crime fighters, the political leaders and the rich, is necessary in order to prevent anarchy. This is also the point at which the camp sentimentalities of the series start to assert themselves.

In the episode “The Joker Goes to School” (Semple, c. 1967b), the villain, the Joker (Cesar Romero), plants silver dollars and stock certificates in the school vending machines in order to lure the students into what Batman terms an “easy living, goofing-off” lifestyle resulting in antisocial and, possibly, criminal behavior. (The ultimate payoff for the criminals is an unlikely point-shaving scheme between two high school basketball teams.) Batman’s concern is that this “easy living” will result in the students’ abandoning their studies and adopting attitudes contrary to the traditional middle-class work ethic. The result of such a practice is, of course, a “moral breakdown” of both the individual members of society and society in general. Based on the content of these messages, and not on their aesthetic presentation, this sequence could link the vending machines and the lure of their prize with the emerging drug culture and that the “easy living, goofing-off” lifestyle was

referring to the hippie subculture. Such a message would appear as an affirmation of society's values. However, this preferred meaning can be deconstructed and negated by the series reliance on camp to present its story. Thus, for many young people, this attack on drug use would not only miss its mark, but could also be viewed as justification for their perception that much of the discourse surrounding drug use was humorous at best and irrational at worse.

The use of camp also allowed the subculture to identify with the series' villains, as in the episode "Hizzonner, the Penguin" (Sherman, c. 1967b), in which the villain exposes the faults of the American political system and its elite. The episode is presented in a satirical manner, with candidates forced to kiss babies (Batman refusing because of sanitary concerns), brass bands (again Batman refuses), and a group of amoral pollsters (called the Gallus Poll). Briefly stated, the plot revolves around the concerns of the political elite of Gotham City, who when learning that the public has become enamored of the glitz and glamour of the emerging post-modern political campaign of the Penguin for mayor, decide to run Batman for the position. Batman's campaign is dull compared to that of the Penguin, who not only kisses babies and enlists a brass band, but also employs the services of the rock band Paul Revere and the Raiders and exotic dancer Little Egypt. Although not articulating them, Batman pledges to campaign on the issues, which for him includes references to good government and solid American middle-class values. Although the

Penguin also promises to support motherhood, country, the flag and honest talk, Batman emerges victorious. The show featured a fight pitting the two opponents against a band of criminals, who were really the Penguin's men, and which was televised by reporters Chet Chumley (Dennis James) and David Duley (Alan Ludden), in an obvious parody of the NBC news team of Chet Huntley and David Brinkley. This fight was staged by the Penguin and was designed to show that he was "hard on crime." Although Batman's victory implies that the United States needs to maintain a political system that supports traditional middle-class values, this show questions the tactics used to gain election and the role of the politician once elected. In one segment, the mayor, the police commissioner, the police chief, and Batman decide that Batman should stand for election, with the mayor actually running the city; thus, the program promotes the concept that decisions concerning the leadership of that system, although nominally in the hands of the electorate, should be dominated by society's elite.

Clearly the *Batman* series used techniques that can be associated with camp. However, the question remains: Was the use of camp profitable for the series? It might appear so, because the series did surpass the magic 100-episode mark, however; owing to its initial twice-weekly schedule, it also reached this distinction in under 2 years. The series ended

on March 14, 1968, [when] Batman and Robin took on Zsa Zsa Gabor's Minerva, a spa proprietress who plundered her clients' brains and then

their valuables. The Caped Crusader and the Boy Wonder triumphed as usual, but still it was curtains for the Dynamic Duo: After two years and 120 episodes, *Batman*, ABC's splashy high-camp action series, had come to an end. *Zzzzwap!* (Patterson, 1999, p. 20)

One recent media critic has maintained that “the worst thing that ever happened to the live-action superhero genre was the *Batman* TV show,” and concluded that camp should “be avoided like Kryptonite” (Tucker, 2000, p. 50). The gist of his argument is that camp trivialized the genre and made it unacceptable for adult audiences. Aside from the fact that the network designed the show primarily for a youth audience, this argument denies the possibility that the camp sensibility reflected the times. Camp, by its very nature, is anti-authority and as Sontag (1966) points out, “the experiences of Camp are based on the . . . discovery that the sensibility of high culture has no monopoly upon refinement. Camp asserts that good taste is not simply good taste; . . . there exists, indeed, a good taste of bad taste” (p. 291).

The mode of establishing criteria for “a good taste of bad taste” was very much a factor in the determination of the subculture style of the 1960s. The problem that the series encountered was not its choice of camp as a vehicle to differentiate itself from other programs, but the sustainability of deliberate camp. Sontag (1966) classified two types of camp: naïve and deliberate. For her, “pure Camp is always naïve . . . [and] the pure examples of Camp are unintentional; they are dead serious. . . . In naïve, or pure Camp, the essential

element is seriousness, a seriousness that fails” (pp. 282-283). *Batman* is an example of deliberate camp, and as such, “knows itself to be Camp (“camping”) [and therefore, it] is usually less satisfying” (p. 282). This does not mean that the initial response to camp was not satisfying, but that once this initial reaction had subsided there was little new except for minor repetition of the same theme.

Furthermore, the use of camp addressed the new sensitivities of the subculture’s style. Ross (1989) noted that

Camp in the U.S., at the moment . . . Sontag immortalized it [1966], was an important break with the style and legitimacy of the old liberal intelligentsia, whose puritanism had always set it apart from the frivolous excesses of the ruling class. (p.147)

The subculture was also involved in this same project. Ross also asserted that

to fully understand this shift in style, it is necessary to look at the two most important contexts of this break: first, Pop, and its reorientation of attitudes toward mass-produced culture; and second, the culture of sexual liberation, for which camp played a crucial role in the redefinition of masculinity and femininity. (pp. 147-148)

Ross (1989) contended that “pop” developed as a response to contemporary concerns about taste and “the media processes through which cultural taste is defined and communicated” (p. 149) and that it was “based on an outright refusal of the act of judgment” (p. 150). This was an important

element of the style considerations of the subculture. Further, as Ross contended, camp “offered a negotiated way by which the Pop ethos could be recognized” (p. 150), and therefore it was an important tool by which the subculture could read all art forms, including television.

Finally, some consideration should be given to the culture of sexual liberation mentioned by Ross (1989) and *Batman*. It is possible that the choice of the “Batman is coming. So is Robin” slogan drew members of the gay community to the program. Many gays were aware of the assertions made by psychiatrist Fredric Wertham in his 1954 *Seduction of the Innocent* to the effect that the *Batman* and *Wonder Woman* comics were “providing ‘homosexual’ role models for children” (Skal, 1992, p. 234)—Skal (1993) notes that “Wertham’s evidence for his claims were purely anecdotal” (p. 233). In the writings of Wertham, there was a subtle link between his homophobic assertions and the sexually suggestive slogan chosen to promote the series. This linkage amounted to an inside joke, and probably contributed to the gay enjoyment of the program and thus a culture of sexual liberation.

#### *Dragnet*: Camp as an Alternative Method of Reading

One television critic, from the perspective of the 1990s, has noted that the episodes in the 1960s version of *Dragnet* have taken on a meaning different from that intended at the time of their production, stating, “In the years since [its inception], it [the *Dragnet* series] has become synonymous only with

alarmist kitsch, like those Fifties films about the Bomb and the Red Scare” (Moser, 1999). In fact, when the programmers of cable’s Nick-at-Nite decided to reintroduce the series to the viewing public in the early 1990s, it positioned the program with a group of situation comedies because they thought that it had humorous appeal. Why? Because it had become camp. This transition might seem natural, because as Sontag (1966) points out,

The canon of Camp can change. Time has a great deal to do with it. Time may enhance what seems simply dogged or lacking in fantasy now because we are too close to it, because it resemble too closely our own everyday fantasies, the fantastic nature of which we don’t perceive. We are better able to enjoy a fantasy as fantasy when it is not our own. (p. 285)

Although it is true that over time an increasing number of viewers have chosen to view *Dragnet* as camp, it can be argued that the seeds of this camp sensitivity existed in the 1960s, because this allowed members of the youth subculture to read the show in an alternative manner. However, before an examination of this premise, it is necessary to explore the evolution of the series as it culminated in the 1960s version and then to investigate the producer’s preferred reading of the program. Finally, an alternative reading method is examined which might have been used to negotiate the program.

When *Dragnet* first aired on radio in June 1949, the executives of the NBC network had questions about the presentation. “They didn’t like the



underplaying, nor the lack of gunplay; in fact they didn't like any of the things which [producer] Jack Webb knew would make it unique" (Hayde, 1999). In fact, many industry analysts felt that the series would be canceled. Webb credited John Crosby's review in the *New York Herald Tribune* with saving the program. The review, in part reproduced below, set the tone for both popular and critical reaction to the franchise which came to dominate the early period of the program's existence. Crosby stated:

The show rings with an authenticity that I found absorbing . . . [the] author [of the broadcast], Sidney Kingley, took a long hard look at police stations before he started writing about one. . . . In *Dragnet*, the two detectives are a couple of attractive, intelligent and very hard-working young men who operate as a team as detectives usually do. . . . Trouble is, most police work is so methodical it's hard to make it exciting. It's difficult to dramatize a cop searching through 400 photographs to find one likeness. The alternative is to put crime detection in human terms which *Dragnet* seems to be trying to do. (Crosby, 1949)

In 1951 *Dragnet* moved to television, starting as a single presentation and then, in the next year, becoming a weekly series (Heldenfels, 1997). "The show rose quickly to and held the top spot on the ratings list, building to a steady audience of 38,000,000 weekly" (Rovin, 1977, p. 27). In 1954 the show received a Nielsen rating of 60.6 ("Jack, Be Nimble!," 1954). In that same

year, the *Dragnet* franchise was extended to include a movie version of the series. Until 1956, when the radio version ended, the show was aired on television and radio on different nights. The television version first ran throughout the 1950s, ending in 1959. It reappeared on television in early 1967 and ran through 1970 (Heldenfels, 1997). The second generation of the series is the focus of this chapter. However, to understand any alternative reading of the program and how camp can be used to further such an alternative reading, it is necessary to examine the formal presentation that was established in the 1950s version of the show. As Marc (1984) asserts, from its beginnings,

*Dragnet* was not merely a hit, it was an ideology, a “look,” and an object of satire that made it a household word even in households that did not necessarily tune it in. It was TV’s first big crime show money-maker, drawing serious network attention—and cash—to the genre. (p. 74)

The premise of the program was simple. *Dragnet* was “the story of two good cops routinely doing their jobs” (Toll, 1982, p. 172), and their jobs were to protect the citizens of Los Angeles from any and all criminals. The program “celebrated the cop on the beat and the unglamorous legwork required by the job” (Rose, 1985, p. 13). The ideological implication was equally simple.

Sgt. Joe Friday was a relentless crime fighting consciousness. Life on *Dragnet* was a corporate fight between Good and Evil, and Friday’s boss was Good. The ferociousness of the battle left little room for

sympathy for the twisted vermin who opposed the public order of the City of Los Angeles, the United States of America, and God Himself, all of whom Friday had sworn “To Protect and to Serve.” (Marc, 1984, p. 75)

The message to the viewers was also simple, and the connection between the protagonist and that message was equally simple. The viewer was presented with a set of policemen who were not only good crime fighters but were also good men, and because of their status and dedication, the laws, the traditions, and the values that they were *sworn to protect* must be equally good.

Closely linked to the premise of the show and its ideological implications was the program’s “look.” According to Heldenfels (1994), producer Jack Webb “went after a look that approximated reality—no makeup, minimal rehearsal—but with strong visual elements such as its use of tight close-ups of faces and objects” (p. 71). The appearance of reality was so strong that a *Newsweek* review of the program in 1952 stressed that the program “refused to let any of his actors except the women use makeup, and they use only their own makeup” (“Detective Story,” 1952). Although reality was a goal of the producer, many of the effects generated by the program were due to financial considerations. “Tight with a buck, Webb began using TelePrompTers off camera so actors could read their lines rather than waste time memorizing them” (Heldenfels, 1994, p. 71). This process also contributed to the use of close-ups, which characterized the “look” of the

program. Another attribute contributing to this “look” was its high production quality; as an example, the *Newsweek* article cited above noted that the show made use of both realistic sets and location shooting and compared the production values of this television series with those of many movies (“Detective Story,” 1952).

*Dragnet* also had an audio presence that made its presentation distinctive. As Heldenfels (1994) points out, the television series had moved from radio, yet it continued to exhibit the strong audio style developed in the older medium: “the theme music, creator Jack Webb’s narration, the public repeating of ‘Just the facts, ma’am,’ a simplification of the series’ ‘All we want are the facts, ma’am’” (p. 71).

When the program was revived in the mid-1960s, few changes were made, except that the new series was shot in color. Although this practice conformed to network policy, it altered the original “look” of the series, and to some extent, its ideological implications as well. “Given the show’s immutable black-and-white moral code, the color episodes tend[ed] to sacrifice a measure of the starkness that contributed so much punch to the original” (Marc & Thompson, 1992, p. 132). However, it could be argued that the shift to color also opened the program to alternative readings, contrasting the “black-and-white moral code” of the program with television’s new presentation of a reality framed in color. However, such considerations were lost on the mainstream viewing public, many of whom applauded the reemergence of the

series and its nostalgic view of American values and the police who protected those values. An example of this perception can be found in the *New York Times* review of the pilot episode of the new series:

Yes, America, that hero of routine law enforcement (“My name’s Friday, I’m a cop.”) and champion to terse dialogue (“Just give us the facts, Ma’am”) is back. And, in an increasingly uncertain world, it’s nice to be able to report that some vectors still remain constant. Jack Webb, for instance. He’s returning with *Dragnet* as both its star and producer, just as in the old days. And once again, the series will be based on the files of the Los Angeles Police. (Neuweiter, 1967)

In examining the last of Marc’s (1984) assertions, it is easy to establish that the network took notice of the program. It produced a profit. *Newsweek* reported that in 1954 the cost of each episode was \$28,000, a small investment considering that the program produced \$3,000,000 annually for the network (“Jack, Be Nimble, 1954). The time appeared right for the program to be reintroduced to the American public.

*Dragnet* ’67 premiered just a few months prior to the Summer of Love, it was indeed a brilliant stroke. Now, not only could Sgt. Joe Friday contend with murder, robbery, and the banalities to traditional vice, but he could confront hippies, revolutionaries, marijuana, and LSD as well. Webb had never been shy about expressing his political opinions. (Marc, 1984, p. 74)

During the mid-1960s the content of the program, the police protecting traditional American values, appealed to many older viewers. Yet it probably was the series' track record for producing cash that was responsible for the show's reemergence on network television.

And though *Dragnet* managed to rate in the Nielsen top twenty (No. 20 in 1968-69), the new version only occasionally lived up to the original. At its best the series was a lean police procedural. At its worst it was a moralizing PR piece for local law enforcement. (Martindale, 1991, p. 134)

It is difficult to examine *Dragnet* without first understanding the role of the series producer Jack Webb.

As a series creator, as a producer, director, and writer; and as the chief executive of his own studio, Mark VII Productions, [and series star,] Webb was a crucial player in the adaptation of the cop-and-robbers legend for television. Sergeant Joe Friday, the staccato-voiced law-and-order missionary whom Webb created and portrayed, first for radio in the 1940s, then for TV in the fifties and sixties, remains a vital character in the myth of the American urban policeman. (Marc & Thompson, 1992, p. 132)

In his various functions, Webb served "to articulate the main lines of the established cultural consensus about the nature of reality" (Fiske & Hartley, 1978, p. 88), or at least, the nature of reality as he perceived it. Further,

through his production techniques he also served as a “mediator of language” (p. 85). The early versions of the program used a narrator to introduce the program; in later versions, Webb assumed this role, and the nature of the presentation became more closely linked to him. However, whoever performed the role of narrator, the function was the same. “Dragnet opened with a crisp, punchy announcement, beginning with “Ladies and gentlemen, the story you are about to hear is true. Only the names have been changed to protect the innocent, and ending with Webb saying simply, “My name’s Friday. I’m a cop” (Toll, 1982, p. 172). Once the audience had been informed that events in the program were *true*, the narrator reinforced the show’s truthful nature by explaining that the episode had been made with the cooperation of the Los Angeles Police Department and announcing that “you [the viewer] will travel step by step on the side of the law, through an actual case, transcribed from official police cases” (p. 172). According to the logic of those who were attempting to establish a preferred reading of the program, once the truthfulness of program had been established, the messages of the show would be seen as equally truthful. These messages were simple. “Webb constantly reminded the viewer that the criminals who preyed on the innocent citizens of his Los Angeles were real and were out there” (Marc, 1984, p. 75) and that the police were professionals who protected both the “innocent citizens” and their society from criminals and any problems that illegal activities might produce.

Webb's use of the close-up and his preference for scant and choppy dialogue also enabled the series to establish the professional, dispassionate nature of the police. *Dragnet* writer Dick Weiner was quoted in Kisseloff (1995) as explaining this technique:

The actor now had to read the dialogue, and he had to look to the side to do it. Webb had a cameraman move in for a close-up. People said, "All you're doing is shooting a picture of a guy's face." Well, it looked like the two guys were talking to each other, but what they were doing was reading their dialogue. (p. 286)

Although this practice had obvious economic advantages for the producer, allowing for less rehearsal time, it also had a tendency to promote the police as dispassionate and matter-of-fact professionals. Further, the notion that American justice correctly responded to any challenge was reinforced at the end of every show when the "sentence was pronounced upon the criminal as an iron hammer of justice pounded the point home" (Marc, 1984, p. 75).

The show also promoted the professional nature of the police through its choice of how the performers were portrayed, and it is through these portrayals that the series attempted "to implicate the individual members of the culture into its dominant value-systems" (Fiske & Hartley, 1978, p. 88). During every program at least part of the time was devoted to showing Friday and his partner doing routine police business. The program also depicted this work as both hard and in many cases unrewarding. The two were often shown



responding to the average citizen, who at times appeared insensitive to the problems of the police. And although these experiences could be degrading for the police officers, the effect promoted the notion that the goal of these professionals was to serve the public in an impartial manner. This notion was further enhanced by the fact that Friday appeared loyal to his job.

Even his humorless monotone (“That’s where I come in; I carry a badge”) is a kind of pledge by the harried policeman not to waste the taxpayer’s time or money in his relentless prosecution of a Manichaeian struggle against the unspeakable scum whose disregard for the law threatens the well-being of the City of Los Angeles and the United States of America. (Marc & Thompson, 1992, pp. 134-135)

When “The Big Interrogation” (Wood, 1967) episode of *Dragnet* aired in 1967, the assumptions concerning both the impartiality of the police and any democratic tendency of the institution were being questioned by an increasing number of Americans. Far from being perceived as egalitarian in their enforcement of the law, the police forces in many areas of the country, especially in the South and on college campuses, were associated with both repression and racism. “The Big Interrogation” is a polemic answer to those feelings. Martindale (1991) offers the following plot summary of the episode: “Friday and Gannon investigate an armed robbery in which an undercover cop becomes the prime suspect when it is discovered he fits the description of the holdup man” (p. 134). After the suspect (Kent McCord) denies any

involvement with the crime, he asks Friday (Jack Webb) and Gannon (Harry Morgan) to believe him, because he is also a policeman. Friday responds: “Just like anyone else, it’s not enough.” This is not only intended to reflect the egalitarianism of police authority, but also to imply that, as an institution, the police can question themselves. After they first identified the accused officer as the robber and gave him a polygraph test, which he passed—without either the suspect or the audience being aware of this fact—the investigators attempt to probe his personal problems. They learn that he has just broken up with his girlfriend because she does not believe that being a police officer conveys enough social status. This provides Friday with an opportunity to launch into a discourse that allows the police, as individuals and as an institution, to claw back “to a position of socio-centrality” (Fiske & Hartley, 1978, p. 88) and also “to assure the culture at large of its practical adequacy in the world by affirming and confirming its ideologies/mythologies in active engagement with the practical and potentially unpredictable world” (p. 88). Among the points Friday makes in his effort to reestablish the status of the police are the following: In social situations “the badge gets in the way,” with people becoming afraid to loosen up in front of a cop, or they ask, “How many apples have you stolen today?” The police officer also engages in constant contact with an “elite” group of criminals and malcontents. Further, he adds that if a police officer is frugal he might be able to save enough money to send his kids to college, but he can never save enough to go to Europe for a vacation. Yet he

concludes that there are 5,000 good police officers in Los Angeles, and he is “glad to be one of them.” This overly polemic response is not only intended to reestablish the status of the police officer, but also to provide additional status through its emphasis on sacrifice. In the end, the actual robber is caught and is found to have an amazing resemblance to the accused officer, who goes on to have a meritorious career. This episode allows for both rehabilitation of the individual and, by inference, the institution itself.

In order “to convince the audience that their status and identity as individuals is guaranteed by the culture as a whole” (Fiske & Hartley, 1978, p. 88), the series relies on these projected professionals “to function as agents of the modern social order” (Taylor, 1989, p. 34), and thus, through their daily activities to protect the citizen they serve and allow them to maintain their individual status and identity. Further, “the police always won, legitimizing the rule of law and its representatives (p. 34).

Fiske and Hartley (1978) argue that another function of television is “to expose . . . any practical inadequacies in the culture’s sense of itself which might result from changed conditions in the world out-there, or from pressure within the culture for a reorientation in favor or a new ideological stance” (p. 88). However, for Webb and the *Dragnet* series, this function was unnecessary. In an interview for *TV Guide* in 1972, Webb asserted that “it’s not the province of entertainment to expose. . . . It’s no secret that everyone in my small group is pro-law enforcement; it’s the only way you can treat a

subject fairly” (Adler, 1972), for Webb, the function of television was not to expose society’s “practical inadequacies,” but rather to expose the practical inadequacies perpetrated against society and its agents of authority. This attitude is reflected in the same *TV Guide* article cited above in which Webb stated: “I’ve always felt that the policeman has been the underdog of society; part of what he became was due to the indifference of the public.” This conservative attitude, as well as Webb’s choice to avoid exposing any of society’s inadequacies, made the messages of the program increasingly irrelevant to many American youths and contributed to their perception that the series could be viewed as camp.

To understand this assertion, it is helpful to again turn to Sontag (1966), who describes camp as “a mode of seduction—one which employs flamboyant mannerisms susceptible to a double interpretation, gestures full of duplicity, with a witty meaning for cognoscenti and another, more impersonal, for outsiders” (p. 281). Further, in order to evaluate the camp nature of *Dragnet*, and the ability of camp to serve as a vehicle for an alternative reading, the above statement must be examined from two perspectives. Does the series employ “flamboyant mannerisms” and “gestures”? If so, are these gestures and mannerisms “susceptible to a double interpretation” and “full of duplicity”?

Concerning the first question, the answer is yes. Further, these flamboyant, unnatural actions were the result of many of the stylistic and ideological decisions made by Webb concerning the series. Anderson (1994)

contends that the unnatural style of the actors, which could certainly be viewed as flamboyant, could be traced to the origins of the show:

Although *Dragnet* was widely acclaimed at the time for its uncanny sense of verisimilitude, the 1950s version of the Jack Webb produced series today seems surreal thanks to the somnambulistic performances and talking-head shooting style necessitated by Webb's cost-cutting device—using TelePrompTers to eliminate the need for rehearsal.

Based on his experience in radio, Webb decided that *Dragnet's* actors should read directly from TelePrompTers placed beneath the camera lens, rather than waste valuable time memorizing lines. Since the series ran simultaneously on radio and television, Webb often used the same scripts for both versions, making only minimal concessions to the opportunities provided by a visual medium. These decisions led to *Dragnet's* monotonous conversational scenes and its unintentionally Brechtian performances, often-parodied elements of a narrative world populated by seemingly emotionless automatons. (p. 67)

Webb's choice of acting style also contributed to the exaggerated appearance of his hero. One on-line commentator maintained that the character's "body language telegraphs 'square' and 'control freak'" he described Webb's character further:

His arms may swing, but Webb holds them stiff as boards, his posture is as rigid as a drill instructor's. His legs march to a monotonous beat that

only he can hear. His head nods or shakes; his facial expressions are few: a raised eyebrow, the hint of a smile, that frown—but mostly his mouth forms an inscrutable straight line. His famous staccato delivery on lines (mostly interrogative) only adds to the effect. (Younger, 2000)

Although not flamboyant in themselves, the costumes of the principal character, Joe Friday, also aided in the perception that this police officer had an unnatural nature. Friday rotated three suits on the show and was rarely seen out of them—he wore a cardigan to his partner’s barbecue and while attending class in the “Night School” episode (Moser, 1999). In this episode, Friday’s insistence on not separating his job from his private life and maintaining a hard-line stance toward his job contributed to an almost cartoon-like characterization of the police. Rushkoff (1994) summarizes the events in this episode in the following manner: “The detectives attend a ‘group therapy’ session and listen to a halfhearted defense of hippie values before slapping cuffs on the group participant and booking him for marijuana possession. There was no room for a reconsideration of values” (p. 46). To many young people, the message of this episode was that communications were impossible between themselves and the police; further, a police officer should be avoided, both on and off the job. Also, because “the detectives on *Dragnet* rarely displayed any emotion” (p. 46), they were seen as being too serious. Thus, for many young people the show could be seen as camp, because as Sontag (1966) maintains “Camp is art that proposes itself seriously, but cannot be taken altogether

seriously because it is ‘too much.’ . . . A work can come close to Camp, but not make it, because it succeeds” (p. 284). *Dragnet*, at least for members of the youth subculture, did not succeed. Thus, the crime drama embraced two important characteristics enumerated by Sontag: First, “as a taste in persons, Camp responds particularly to the markedly attenuated and to the strongly exaggerated” (p. 279), and second, “the whole point of Camp is to dethrone the serious (p. 288).

To evaluate the program’s ability to produce an alternative reading for the members of the subculture, it is helpful to examine the first episode of the revamped series, “The Big LSD” (Randolph, 1967). Martindale (1991) described the plot of the program as “Friday and Gannon break up an LSD party and track down the drug’s pusher” (p. 134). He clearly addressed Webb’s new concerns for the problems facing 1960s society. Along with the decision to film the show in color, the inclusion of more contemporary problems also served to give the series a facelift, and, as Marc and Thompson (1992) asserts, this approach was designed to make the program more relevant to the viewers of the period:

From a cultural historical perspective, the timing [of the 1960s series] couldn’t have been better. With sixties polarization bringing American society to the political cracking point, the old McCarthy-era extremism of *Dragnet* was given fresh life. The counterculture spawned by the Vietnam War provided Webb with a whole new range of pinko

stereotypes to animate what had become the stilted tones of his fifties-style paranoia. Protesters, marijuana smokers, LSD-users, and even the occasional feminist or eco-nut showed up as obstacles to Friday's pledge "to protect . . . and to serve." (p. 136)

The show begins with an introductory segment narrated by Webb. Here, through an establishing shot that features a large portion of an urban setting, he introduces his city, Los Angeles, where most people can "enjoy life." This image, a modern, not closed-in city, with good roads linking the residents' homes to their work places, and Webb's statements are designed to reassure the viewer that Los Angeles provides a clean and friendly environment for people to pursue their lives. Following upon the motif of providing for the family, the program features an image of an amusement park, Webb then informs the audience that his city "reserves places for kids." As pictures of several bars and a strip joint appear on the screen, Webb also concedes that the city provides places for "the young that feel old." The justification for this sort of entertainment is the fact that many of these young people are "looking for something." Once again, Webb's city provides a proper venue for their search—a downtown church, a Jewish temple, a suburban church, the Griffith Observatory, and a college. Closing in the show's traditional fashion, Webb acknowledges that the city can also provide improper venues for young peoples' search, like "a number 5 capsule full of drugs," and it is here that Joe Friday, and by inference the entire police force, must protect his city and its



citizens. By linking the city, the family, happy times, religion, science, and education, Webb hopes to remind the viewer of the benefits of the society that he has sworn to protect. This introduction also serves to establish a series of counterpoints directing the viewer to contrast a society in which one can “enjoy life,” to a new world in which life is threatened because of the problems of drugs, which the police are attempting to stop. The two readings of this introduction, Webb’s preferred meaning and an alternative camp reading, would revolve around differing interpretations of how to “enjoy life.” For many young people, the first image of the city would send up a red flag. Not only were the value of life in the suburbs and the work patterns of their parents being called into question, but also a fledgling back-to-nature movement, which rejected the urban lifestyle in general, was beginning to surface from within the subculture. The other images in this introduction would also remind many youths about other questions they had concerning the values of American society—questions focusing on the relevance of the nuclear family, the institution of marriage, organized religion, and the educational process. But both Webb’s preferred reading and the alternative view, the use of the counterpoints to contrast the two lifestyles would serve the same function, although not project the same meaning. The preferred reading would equate drugs, and the lifestyle that promoted drug use, with danger both to the user and to society in general. The alternative view would see drug usage as just that, an alternative to the traditional lifestyle that many young people were

rejecting. Further, the brief sequence showing the bars and strip joints would aid young people in equating the use of alcohol with drugs, both of which had debilitating effects, yet only one of which was illegal.

At this point, the episode introduces the viewer to the new drug that is now threatening American society. It is LSD, and as the plot begins, it is not an illegal drug. It is also at this point that the hallmark of camp, and Webb's favorite heuristic device, the love of extravagance, comes into play. Friday and Gannon are summoned to a park by a report of a young male "chewing the bark off trees!" As if this unusual behavior did not, in itself, constitute a reason for concern, the episode embellishes the youth's action. When the policemen arrive they find the young male with his head buried in the ground. After he emerges, from the ground with his face painted blue and yellow, he utters nonsensical phrases concerning the nature of reality and claims to hear colors. Further, at one point, Blue Boy (Michael Burns), as he claims to be called, attacks Gannon, ripping his coat. The purpose of this sequence is to demonstrate the danger of the new drug. However, for the youth audience, the over-the-top nature of the presentation would not only lead to a degree of cynicism concerning the truthfulness of the depiction, but probably cause a comic reaction. These reactions would be accelerated by the overall appearance of the youth. Aside from having his face painted, Blue Boy appears clean-cut, with his slightly over-the-ears hair appearing generally clean and well groomed. Although, as Marc (1984) points out, the series premiered

during the “Summer of Love” (p. 74), it would have been obvious to any young person that Webb had not bothered to send a camera crew to San Francisco or even tune in to the local news to actually see the attire of members of the subculture. The inability to add this minor element of realism to the program would reinforce the notion that Webb “just didn’t get it.” This insensitivity concerning the dress codes of the youth subculture extended throughout the episode and even extended to their concern for current social issues. At one point, while the officers visit a social gathering spot for young people, the program reduces this concern to a single placard titled “We Protest,” thus lumping all the social concerns of a generation into the notion that they protested because it was fun. Such trivializing of the issues and actions of the youth subculture represented what Marc (1984) terms “the poetry of polarization: The ‘unhip’ applauded this statement for decency, the ‘hip’ laughed their heads off” (pp. 78-79).

As Rose (1985) points out, the fact that “there was never any question about who was in control . . . [and that] the righteous indignation of Joe Friday was an awesome sight” (p. 13) produced the feeling that the police were insensitive toward young people. This attitude was confirmed in the dealings between the police and Blue Boy. After establishing his unnatural actions and questionable state of mind, the officers inform Blue Boy of his rights, as if a person in that condition could understand them. Informing people of their rights plays a large part in this episode, with the police giving drug users the

Miranda warning on three occasions. On all these occasions, the police demonstrate questionable interpretations of the Supreme Court's ruling. In one instance, one police officer is even shown insisting that because a drug user waived his rights, he had to inform on other drug users. In this episode, playing fast and loose with American justice is not limited to the Miranda decision. In order to maintain their control and to protect society from the menace of LSD, when confronted by the fact that the juvenile male had ingested a drug that was not illegal, the police decide to charge him with violating section 601 of the Welfare and Institution Code, which allowed incarceration for those "in danger of leading an idle, dissolute or immoral life." Whereas Webb was attempting to demonstrate how police authority could be innovative in its attempts to protect the public, the members of the young subculture would see this segment as an example of an abusive police force.

At the end of this segment and after the juvenile courts award Blue Boy into the custody of his parents, Friday rushes out of the court building to light a cigarette, only to have Blue Boy grab his match to light his own cigarette, look up at Friday, and ask, "You satisfied, Sherlock?" This incident was intended to dramatize the disrespect still prevalent in Blue Boy's attitude. However, it also served to compare the use of another debilitating, but legal, substance to illegal drugs.

Because, as Sontag (1966) states, "Camp responds particularly to the markedly attenuated and to the strongly exaggerated" (p. 279), this episode

fails in its only real attempt rationally to discuss LSD when, in a police lab, the offices discuss the drug's history, focusing on an assumption that it produces detrimental psychological effects. Although the presentation is informative, the manner of the presentation, with choppy dialogue and obvious moral superiority on the part of the police, reduces the effectiveness of the message.

The episode ends with the death of Blue Boy from an overdose of LSD. For Webb, "drugs were death" (Moser, 1999, p. 1), which constituted a continuing theme for *Dragnet* programs dealing with drug use. "In another episode ["The Big High" (Vowell, 1967)], young parents blow grass; naturally, their toddler drowns" (p. 1).

Sontag (1966) claims that "Camp is the glorification of character" (p. 285), and in many respects, Webb subscribed to this principle when creating the members of his police force. Like Sontag's description of camp taste, Webb felt that the audience "responds to 'instant character' . . . a person being one, very intense thing" (p. 286). This design on the part of Webb contributed to the potential for a camp interpretation of the series. It also allowed for an alternative reading. Webb preferred that the characters and the problems encountered in the program be taken seriously; however, the function of camp is to deconstruct the serious. Further, for *Dragnet* this process is not too difficult, for because Moser (1999) points out, "Watts may have been on fire but Friday was busy busting suburban 'juvies' for shoplifting." In this regard, *Dragnet* conforms to Sontag's (1966) assessment that the "ultimate Camp

statement: [is] it's good because it's awful" (p. 292). For members of the youth subculture, awful was not only defined as lack of sensitivity for their generation, but also as the glorification of society's authority and of those who chose to act as its agents. Thus, Webb's exhortation of style in the series allowed members of the subculture not only not to take the characterizations seriously but also not to take the messages conveyed in the program seriously. In this way the application of camp to the program allowed the viewer to negotiate a new meaning for the messages, a meaning that was in opposition to the preferred meaning of the producer.

### Conclusion

As the United States moved into the mid-1960s, many young people began to question their education, accepted notions of love, marriage, politics, economics, and even traditional attitudes concerning dress and style. In short, they were beginning to form what Hebdige (1979) terms a spectacular subculture. Also during this time two programs, *Batman* and *Dragnet*, aired on television, both produced as a response to the subculture. In both, elements of camp would influence their reception by that group. Camp was used in *Batman* to produce humor and gain the acceptance of the youth audience. *Dragnet's* producer, Jack Webb, had little concern for the youth market, and many of the plots he presented were in response to what he thought were excesses on the part of the subculture. Yet the series had some resonance for American youth,

who used camp as a tool to negotiate a reading of the series that was in opposition to Webb's intended messages.

Like Sontag (1966), who postulates that for camp "style is everything" (p. 288), the producers of *Batman* recognized that camp would appeal to the youth market of the time, whose members valued style over everything else and recognized that it was "pregnant with significance [and filled with] gestures, [and] movements toward a speech which offends the 'silent majority'" (Hebdige, 1979, p.18). *Batman* used comic book heroes, villains, and visuals, along with repetitive sight gags and eccentric costumes to emphasize style and camp sensitivities. The show gained an initial popularity with American youth, appealing to many of the non-traditional elements of style being adopted by the member's of the subculture. Although many of the messages promoted in the show embraced the same values that the subculture was rejecting, the programs use of camp, which resulted in outlandish visuals and the absurdly serious nature of the heroes, allowed the members of the subculture to reject those messages as being part of the act. *Batman* could not sustain this audience, however. Part of the problem that the series had in maintaining its audience was its reliance of what Sontag (1966) terms deliberate camp. Sontag differentiates between naïve camp, which is "unintentional" and "dead serious" (p. 282), and deliberate camp, which is manufactured artifice. The problem with deliberate camp is that it is "a one trick pony", once the artifice is appreciated and the double meanings understood, any subsequent presentation

loses effect, while naïve camp, because of the serious nature of its presentation, keeps the joke going. While publicity could induce the youth audience to watch *Batman*, and the use of camp kept them watching, at least for a while; however, because of the deliberate nature of the camp, the show's viewers began to lose interest, and the program's appeal dwindled.

Hall (1980) maintained that television producers provide a representation of society's dominant ideology in the texts of their programs. Those viewers who identify with the dominant ideology accept the preferred meaning of the producers who have designed a text that reflects the dominant ideology. Those viewers who do not identify with the dominant ideology read the text of the program in oppositional terms. The majority of viewers, however, accept the dominant ideology on most levels but tailor the reading to the text of the program to reflect their specific needs, thus producing a negotiated reading.

In 1960s crime programs, the dominant ideology stressed the necessity for maintaining authority and depicting the agents of that authority in the most favorable way, and this was especially true of the *Dragnet* series. As pointed out above, at the time these programs were being produced, a youth subculture was developing that rejected the dominant ideology of these programs. Fiske (1987) asserts,

Because television is institutional art with a strong economic motive, this preferred reading will normally bear the dominant ideology, and the



relation of any one subculture's reading to the preferred reading reproduces the relation of that subculture to the dominant ideology.

Reading relations and social relation reproduce each other. (p. 117)

Thus, on the basis of the text alone, for many in the subculture the natural reading relationship to *Dragnet* was one of opposition. However, this process was modified through the use of camp as a reading device. Camp's reliance on promoting double interpretation of both signs and actions provided just the tool necessary for establishing a negotiated reading that both provided pleasure and supported the ideals of the subculture. On a visual level, producer Jack Webb's decision to continue certain practices he had established in the earlier run of the program in the 1950s, such as reliance on close-up shots, the use of choppy dialogue, and the humorless, "just-the-facts" attitude of the principal actors, contributed to an ambiguous reading of the series. The principals could be seen as professionals intent on achieving their goals or as engaging in unrealistic representations of human interactions. It is clear that Webb preferred that his characters be taken seriously, and even more importantly he hoped that the problems that the police faced and the challenge to their authority be taken seriously. However, through the use of camp the reader is allowed to deconstruct the events of the series, including the producer's intended seriousness, and for the subculture this meant a rejection of the notions that society's authority and its agents needed to be glorified. By approaching the series with camp sensibilities and not taking either the characterizations or the

messages seriously, the viewer was allowed to negotiate a meaning that was primarily in opposition to Webb's preferred meaning.

## CHAPTER 4

### I GOT A HEAD FULL OF IDEAS THAT'S DRIVIN' ME INSANE: TELEVISION LOOKS AT RACE AND WOMEN IN THE MID-1960S

I ain't gonna work on Maggie's farm no more.  
No, I ain't gonna work on Maggie's farm no more.  
Well, I wake in the morning,  
Fold my hands and pray for rain,  
I got a head full of ideas  
That's drivin' me insane.  
It's a shame the way she makes me scrub the floor.  
I ain't gonna work on Maggie's farm no more.  
—Bob Dylan, “Maggie’s Farm”

The reference to “Maggie’s Farm” in Dylan’s (1965) song is a thinly veiled allusion to American society in the mid-1960s, and like the sentiments it expresses, many of the members of that society were choosing to reject the idea of working within the system. Further, the lines “I got a head full of ideas that’s drivin’ me insane” not only address the notion that many people were developing new ideas concerning their roles in American society, but also their frustrations that their new conceptions of identity were becoming increasingly marginalized within that society.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine how television confronted this dilemma through the development of new

police/detective dramas that reflected rifts in the system brought on by racial tensions and the growing concerns reflecting gender differences. This chapter concentrates on the images which *I Spy* and *The Avengers* presented as accurate representations of Blacks and women in the 1960s. This chapter concludes with an evaluation of the impact of these programs on their viewers and on American society as a whole.

#### Television's Shift in Depicting Race Relations: *I Spy*

Prior to the 1965 season, producer Sheldon Leonard developed a concept for a television series that he hoped would capitalize on the popularity of the espionage genre and the James Bond-type hero. However, instead of one spy, there would be two “undercover agents who travel around the world on various assignments” (McNeil, 1991, p. 369). Leonard’s formula split the Bond character in two, making one partner more cerebral and the other more urbane, with both being men of action. He cast Robert Culp as the urbane spy, thinking that he might have found a perfect counterpart, he approached the network about his choice. Leonard later recalled the meeting: “I went to New York to persuade Robert Kintner [of NBC] to take a chance with *Cosby*. . . . After the usual amenities, I told him I saw a guy I wanted. He said, ‘Well, why didn’t you sign him?’” (Kisseloff, 1995, p. 520). Leonard responded, “Because he’s black,” to which Kintner replied, “What

difference does that make?” (p. 520). Thus, Leonard, Kintner, Cosby, and Culp set out to make television history by airing the “first noncomedy series to star a Black actor” (McNeil, 1991, p. 369).

Leonard’s concern about using a Black actor was based upon his early experience in television when he produced *The Danny Thomas Show*. He related that “we had a black actress [on the show] who played a housekeeper. Sometimes Danny would put his arm around her shoulder or in one case kisses her on the cheek” (Kisseloff, 1995, p. 520). The response to these innocent acts of loyalty and friendship on the part of Thomas formed the basis for Leonard’s concern. He explained, “We’d get mail saying, ‘If I want to see a white man make love to a gorilla, I’ll go to a freak show’” (p. 520). Although this letter represents the most extreme form of racism, unfortunately it differed by only a matter of a few degree from the mainstream view of White America in the 1950s. The country was still segregated, with Blacks in both the North and the South, separated into their own communities and stereotyped into images and behaviors dating to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Also, just as unfortunately, television reflected those stereotypes.

The first television show to feature Blacks was an import from radio, *The Amos & Andy Show*. This show featured an all-Black cast and revolved around life in their segregated community. The people who

inhabited this community were based on many of the stereotypes referred to above: they were lazy, opportunistic, ill-educated, and spoke in a pronounced dialect (Riggs, 1991), even though, as Ely (1991) points out that the television series attempted to soften the stereotypes introduced in the radio series by visually depicting the cast to “reflect middle-class tastes” (p. 212).

The principal characters were George “Kingfish” Steven (Tom Moore), “a scheming con man and president of the Mystic Knights of the Sea, a fraternal order” (McNeil, 1991, p. 42); Andrew H. Brown (Spencer Williams), “Kingfish’s trusting friend and usual mark” (p. 42); and Amos Jones (Alvin Childress), “a level-headed cabdriver” (p. 42). The show presented Blacks as second-class citizens capable of achieving only second-class positions, such as the president of a small local fraternal order and a cab driver (Riggs, 1991). The show lasted three seasons and was canceled by CBS only because of complaints from the NAACP, which felt that the program’s “characterizations were stereotyped and only served to reinforce the feeling of prejudice harbored by white Americans” (McNeil, 1991, p. 42).

In 1950 *Beulah* appeared on ABC. The program “told the story of a [Black] maid [Ethel Waters, and later Louise Beavers] with a heart of gold” (p. 84), who was comfortable being a domestic ignoring her

own family but dedicated to the White family for whom she worked (Riggs, 1991). Not only was this Black woman presented in a secondary position, but she was also shown achieving happiness only through her service to Whites. It is this characterization that calls into question whether or not Waters and Beavers were, in fact, the stars of the program. Moore (1980) defined the term “Black second banana” as follows:

The concept of “black second banana” essentially stated that black actors were usually cast in the roles of auxiliaries to white people. Their only reason for existence on the screen, their *raison d’être*, is for the benefit of white people in the story.” (p. 130)

By Moore’s definition, and although she was the title character in this program, the character of Beulah could be said to be television’s first Black second banana.

One positive image of Blacks on television was the occasional appearance by Black performers on variety shows. One such guest was Nat King Cole, the talented singer and pianist, who in 1956 was given his own fifteen minute, and later thirty minute, spot on NBC (McNeil, 1991, p. 84). However, during the same period the federal courts ordered the school system in Little Rock, Arkansas, to integrate. This

challenge to the White-controlled education system in that state focused the concern of many Whites, especially in the South, on all Black activity. As a result of complaints about Cole's program, many featuring Cole sharing the stage with White female performers, the network found it impossible to find commercial sponsorship for the show, and it was canceled after one year (Riggs, 1991).

With the exception of some dramatic shows, notably *East Side*, *West Side*, and public interest programs, television adopted a familiar method for dealing with race problems and Black identity, which was to simply ignore them. Even by the mid-1960s many television programs refused to feature Black actors, even in minor roles, and when the rare Black did appear, the presentation was limited to a single episode. A good example was *The Avengers* series, in which only one episode, "Small Game for Big Hunters," contained any Black cast members (Smith, 2000).

Then came the *I Spy* series, which represented a milestone in television programming by featuring a Black actor in a starring role. Although the program began to "expose, any practical inadequacies in the culture's sense of itself." (Fiske & Hartley, 1978, p.88) by presenting an interracial pair of intelligence agents working together and forcing the audience visually to confront the everyday possibility of an integrated



society, it also presented the Black character who accepted many of the values associated with the majority of the White audience. The series developed several tactics in order to achieve this balance. To a greater or lesser extent, these devices were included in every episode of the series. For brevity's sake, however, only one episode, "A Day Called 4 Jaguar," is analyzed in order to evaluate the images and messages of *I Spy*. The video cassette jacket offers the following description of the program:

Secret agents Kelly Robinson (Robert Culp) and Alexander Scott (Bill Cosby) take off on an incredible adventure through the jungles of Mexico in search of missing Russian cosmonaut Dimitri Balin. The two agents have to find Balin in order to warn him that a Soviet agent is planning to force him back to Russia. Living peacefully in the Aztec jungle, superstitious Indians believe Balin to be the reincarnation of the god Quetzalcoatl. In the dramatic final confrontation, the superpower agents are helpless when a shocking form of ancient Aztec justice decides the ultimate outcome. (A day, 1982)

Although the inclusion of a Black in *I Spy* forced attentions on the everyday inadequacies with regard to race relations as they existed in American society at the time, this presentation also served "to convince

the audience that their status and identity as individuals is guaranteed by the culture as a whole.” (Fiske & Hartley, 1978, p. 88). Through the incorporation of a Black intelligence agent, the show not only promoted the myths of pluralism and diversity in American society. but actually elevated them, linking the performance of the Black agent in the service of the government, and by implication, American society, with these values. While these messages are implied and are never referred to in the text of the episode, the fact remains that the viewer is presented with the image of a defender of American values and not a malcontent who questions these values. This impression is also advanced by the text of the show.

The above summation of “A Day Called 4 Jaguar” failed to mention that the Soviet agent who is sent to retrieve the cosmonaut attempts to kill three people in order to cover his tracks. The undesirable nature of the agent’s methods, along with Kelly’s tolerance of the cosmonaut’s desire to experience an alternate lifestyle and remain with the Mexican farmers, reaffirms the concept that America is culturally superior to Communist Russia. Although the Black agent, Scotty, does not participate in the discussion with the cosmonaut, he supports Kelly’s decision to leave the Russian with the peasants, and thus associates himself with the values that the White agent advances. Furthermore,

through the depiction of the pastoral culture of the Mexican peasants as “superstitious,” the episode attempts to reassure the audience that American culture had advanced from its pastoral beginnings and was superior to any challenging culture, rural or advanced. This second notion is important because it clearly places the Black agent within the American mainstream and opposed to the implications of the youth subculture, or at least those elements within that subculture that promoted the back to nature movement—an attempt to establish communal communities based on earlier agrarian patterns. This agrarian metaphor is extended by the appearance of the cosmonaut who is dressed in native clothes, has long hair, and wears a headband; that is, he looks the part of a hippie. In other words, Cosby’s Alexander Scott character was a “convert to the values of white, middle-class America and his character did not pose a physical or sexual threat to common sensibilities” (Reeves, 1987, p.447). Not only were the values of the character attractive to the White audience but so too was the fact that he did not pose a sexual threat to his White counterpart. In the conclusion of this episode, Scotty and Kelly are relaxing in a private swimming pool when they are visited by a group of females, already attired in bikini swimsuits. Within this group of interlopers there is one Black female, who immediately pairs up with Scotty, leaving Kelly to choose from five

White females. This not only removed the threat of a Black male coupling with a White female but also reinforces the playboy position of the White male.

The principal method used by the program to present a nonthreatening Black to its White audience was through Bill Cosby's characterization of Alexander Scott. Dates (1993) notes that Cosby/Scott

displayed a strong self-respect, coupled with a sense of comic timing that appealed to many viewers. Moreover, Cosby seemed to not take himself or the world very seriously at a time when there were very serious concerns about social and civil rights on many minds. Thus, he made people feel comfortable with his presence and somewhat forgetful of his African heritage. Cosby was an all-American to most people. (pp. 280-281)

Cosby/Scott was seen as the type of person with whom the average White person could be friends, even neighbors, and a welcome guest at the weekend cookout. This image was extenuated by the obvious friendship between the two agents, and this was by design. Writer Eric Bercovivi claimed that the producer of the series, Sheldon Leonard, told his directors "to keep the camera on Culp and Cosby whatever they did or said" (Stempel, 1992, p. 104), which encouraged interplay and ad-libs between the two major actors and promoted a sense of personal attachment. However, this attachment represented more than two people sharing a laugh over the grill; it was based on their

professional relationship. Spangler (1992) differentiates the series from others on television in that its “emphasis was on bonding through activity, not intimacy” (p. 102). According to Spangler, this mutual respect initially formed on the professional level, was reflected as follows:

These men were, of course, bonded: they saved each other’s lives on many occasions. They also had an easy relationship with each other, sparked by touches of humor. They occasionally double-dated and spent free time with each other; their racial differences were never a problem. (Spangler, 1992, p. 101)

As a result of what Craig (1991) terms “men *doing* together rather than *being* together” (p. 5), the series promoted the notion that professionalism and hard work will operate as a leveling device within the American system. For liberals at the time, this series could be seen as proof that a Black man could be equal to a White man on a professional level, not only in its representation of the agents but also through the interplay of the actors, and that if integration was encouraged and allowed to flourish the system itself would produce a leveling effect.

But did the show really produce a leveling effect? Were the two principal characters truly equal? Although in the episode “Turkish Delight” the characters were reversed, with Cosby playing the romantic lead (Stempel, 1992, p. 104), in the episode being analyzed the Black

character takes on the appearance of a second banana. The show clearly falls within Moore's (1980) conception by "presenting black actors in the role of 'black second banana,' the pal of, or assistant to, the white hero" (p. 130), because the two agents are "pals." However, the operative word in this definition is "assistant" which implies a secondary position. In this episode the argument can be made that Scotty is presented in such a manner. Although he is empowered with superior ability—knowledge of at least three languages, Spanish, Russian, and English, and a more rational approach to decision making—within this text, Kelly, the White agent, is dominant, not only in terms of actual time on the screen, but also in relation to Scotty, because it falls to Kelly to negotiate with the disaffected cosmonaut. Thus, it is the White man's reliability, and, implicitly, America's credibility, that is judged in this exchange; Scotty merely follows Kelly lead. Through this formulation the hegemonic notion of individual White superiority is maintained.

Another measure taken to insure that the series would be nonthreatening to the White audience was the fact that "Cosby's character did not usually address his blackness or another character's whiteness, . . . he was portrayed in an atmosphere where being black merely meant having slightly darker skin" (Dates, 1990, p. 280). In addition to allowing the audience a vehicle to avoid any uncomfortable

questions concerning race relations, this encouraged the idea that there were no cultural difference between the races. Although any avoidance of cultural differences reinforced the White attitude that American society could accommodate all its members without substantial change and that racial problems were limited to a small portion of the country populated by equally small-minded people, it ignored the question of Black cultural identity. The program's portrayal of "blacks as just human beings, rather than as black human beings . . . sanctified whitewashed images" (Moore, 1980, pp. 130-131). Further, as Reeves (1987) points out, the presentation of the Black character in this series "only really legitimated sophisticated members of the black race" (p.446), and represented an intelligent Black man "who, failing to lick them [the system], had joined them" (p.447).

In fact this identification with the values of the American system stood in contrast to the views of many Black leaders, who expressed bitterness and frustration with the system. "Scott does not share this bitterness and does not see himself as markedly different from his white colleagues. This reflects the series' underlying premise that mutual goodwill can make race irrelevant to social relations" (Lichter et al., 1991, p. 238). The representation of the Black American on *I Spy* is

consistent with what Gray (1997) termed “civil rights subjects,” which he defined as

representations of those black, largely middle-class benefactors who gained the most visibility as well as material and status rewards from the struggles and opportunities generated by the civil rights movement. This cultural figure embodies complex codes of behavior and propriety that make it an example of citizenship and responsibility—success, mobility, hard work, sacrifice, individualism. (p. 353)

This representation reaffirms the values of the mainstream White culture while also reaffirming the liberal goals of the civil rights movement, integration and equality of opportunity. During this period, any television program that identified itself with the goals of the civil rights movement presented a positive message to its viewers. This was particularly true of *I Spy*, which not only offered such identification but offered a positive message in its choice to hire a Black in a lead role. However, through its overall acceptance of the values of White middle-class culture, and through its inability to question even minor aspects of that culture, the series failed to acknowledge value in the Black culture. It also accepted the White middle-class notion of success at a time when most Blacks were financially unable to achieve that level of success.



Although the series had some problems with Black identity, it did make positive contributions for many Black actors and refined the Black image on television. The series “opened the way for Blacks to appear in roles that did not require the actor to be Black. There was no more use of poor English, servile shuffling, or pop-eyed double takes for comic effect” (Lichter et al., 1991, p. 237). The series also had an effect on the genre, as the inclusion of Blacks on law enforcement teams became a staple in television crime shows within a few years (p. 238).

An examination of the impact on the Black viewer of the series *I Spy* offers dubious conclusions. Through its presentation of an industrious, educated, and above all, patriotic Black super spy, the series *I Spy* granted American Blacks the capacity to become all-American citizens and challenged many of the stereotypical images of the Black race that were formerly shown on television. One image that was not challenged was that of the Black sense of humor; however, even here, the series altered former stereotypes. Whereas previous examples of Black’s expressing humor were associated with a demeaning devil-may-care attitude, in this series, humor was used as a tool to express and promote the bonding between the Black and White partners—and by implication the Black and White races. In this regard, the series can be said to have hastened the acceptance of the policy of integration.

However, the assumption that the series, and liberal social policy of the time, fostered positive social change presupposed that the middle-class goals and attitudes of mainstream White society were the same in all of Black society. This presupposition was under challenge by many Black leaders even then and would be increasingly questioned in later decades. The calls by many young Blacks for “Black Power,” a popular demand in the late 1960s, were also calls for Blacks to redefine their own identity in American culture and to act with pride in promoting this new identity. In this regard, the series can be seen as hindering the Black struggle for acceptance and self-determination in American culture.

#### *The Avengers* and the Depiction of Women

*The Avengers* first appeared on British television in 1961. The series featured a doctor, Ian Hendry, and his more worldly associate John Steed (Patrick Macnee), who were attempting to track down the murderers of the doctor’s wife and bring them to justice—hence the name and mission of the series (McCall, 1992, p. 21). Initially the series revolved around the attempts of the duo to bring more common criminal types, murderers, robbers, and others, to justice; however, as the plot lines of the program expanded, it was discovered that the more popular episodes dealt with cases of espionage. Carraze, Putheaud, and Geairns (1998) assert that the reason for the popularity of these shows was that

“the Burgess/Maclean case [it was discovered that several well-placed respected British diplomats were agents of the Soviet Union] was fresh in everyone’s mind and there was a lingering distrust of Eastern bloc governments” (p. 38). Along with the fine-tuning of the format, it was decided to fine-tune the appearance of Steed. Macnee decided that his character—who, in his words, was “a thoroughly professional secret agent; expert at murder, arson, burglary, forgery and the use of explosives, codes, and poisons . . . dedicated, ruthless, unscrupulous” (‘Patrick Macnee easily,’ 1967)—needed a new look. This new image included an Edwardian wardrobe featuring a bowler, fitted suits with a waistcoat and an umbrella, and merged into a persona who favored fine food, wine, and classic cars (‘Patrick Macnee easily’, 1967). This new image would prove popular with the British audience and became a main feature of future presentations.

At the end of the first season Ian Hendry decided to move from television to film. This created a space for an expanded role for the Steed character, and eventually the arrival of Catherine Gale (Honor Blackman). If Steed’s new image represented a departure from the stereotype of the gumshoe detective, Gale’s image represented even more of a variance in the image of the detective’s sidekick. Unlike the receptionist in *77 Sunset Strip*, who occasionally aided the male

detectives in addition to her office duties, the Gale character was an active partner in both the mental and physical aspects of the series. Further, her appearance did not convey the demure image associated with most television women. She wore modern fashions, including a controversial leather outfit. This representation of an active, modern woman was expanded when the Gale character left the series—Blackman also chose to leave the series for film, becoming “a Bond Girl” in *Goldfinger*.

In December 1963 the British producers of *The Avengers*, Associated British Corporation, was approached by the American Broadcasting Company about the possibility of turning the cult series into a motion picture. However, with the departure of Blackman the project was abandoned (J. S. Miller, 2000, p. 54; and Smith, 2000b). After 6 months, the production of a new television series was turned over to Telemen Limited. Telemen’s head, Julian Wintle, drafted Albert Fennel and Brian Clemens to retool the series and recruit a new female lead.

The new female lead was Diana Rigg, and her character was Emma Peel. The addition of the actress and the character proved beneficial for the series, especially in relation to the American audience, who were unaware of the Blackman/Gale character of the earlier

presentations. The Rigg/Peel reception in the United States was reflected by the following varying, yet positive, assessments. In reviewing the series, *Playboy* claimed that “the star is definitely Diana Rigg, who as the widowed Mrs. Emma Peel (her husband was a test pilot), exudes more sheer sexuality than American TV has previously handled” (“*The Avengers—Jolly Good*”, 1967). A more sensitive appraisal was offered by Gamman (1988), who claimed that “the character of Emma Peel in *The Avengers* represented the spirit of the active and liberated woman anticipated in the sixties” (p. 10). The duality of image came to dominate the assessment of the popular appeal of the program and reflects both the sexual and identity tensions which many people in the mid-1960s were beginning to address. These concerns are discussed later.

In an attempt to appeal to the international market, especially the American market, the retooling of the series included a shift from videotape to film. This decision not only increased the production value of the show, but because of the freedom that the process allowed, location shooting became an element of the series (“Emma Peel and Beyond,” 2000). In fact, this new emphasis on location shooting provided, what one on-line commentator claims, were “the best views England had to offer” (Smith, 2000b) and added to the allure of the

program for foreign audiences. This retooling also included a gradual shift in the story lines of the program into a fantasy world “populated by a seemingly endless supply of bizarre companies, organizations, and a myriad of wonderfully eccentric characters” (“Emma Peel and Beyond,” 2000). Humor also became an increasing element of the production, with exchanges between the Peel character and the Steed character reflecting both social commentary and sexual tensions. Humor was also extended to poke fun at its contemporary American rivals. “The Girl from Auntie” episode satirized *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*, and *Mission Impossible* was parodied in the fifth season by the “Mission Highly Improbable” episode (Carraze et al., 1997, p. 41).

In 1966 the National Broadcasting Company announced that it intended to convert its entire program offering to color, and as a result, its competitors quickly expanded their color offerings. The producers of the series, desirous of recouping their investment after changing to film, approached ABC about purchasing the series for the American market and converting it to color. With the condition that the monochrome episodes be part of the package, the deal was made, and *The Avengers* appeared in the United States. The addition of color not only increased the production value of the program but through the inclusion of a rich variety of colors within the program, the series found itself stylistically

aligned with the youth subculture (Carraze et al., 1997, pp. 40-41). Further, although “*The Avengers* predated the James Bond films” (Smith, 2000d), for the American audience the association with the popular British intelligence agent was unmistakable, and this contributed to the program’s success.

Diana Rigg left the program after the producers failed to increase her salary to 450 pounds a week and took a 70 pound a week job playing Viola in Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* at Stratford on Avon (“Back in the Shakespeare Business, 1966). Steed got a new partner, Tara King (Linda Thorson), who, although as active as her predecessors, presented a new image. Producer John Bryce was quoted as saying, “She will be soft with all the female weakness—and attributes” (Dean, 1967). Obviously, one of the attributes of this new image was the female breast. Thorson was quoted as stating: “we are bringing back the bosom. The dresses will have plunging neck lines” (Dean, 1967). Even with this new visual emphasis on the female body, the popularity of the program began to diminish and the King/Thorson year was the program’s last. However, although there was always a sexual element within the series, *The Avengers* owed much of its success, especially among female viewers, to its positive portrayal of women’s roles within the program. This is

indicated by J. S. Miller (2000) who began his essay on the program with the following quote attributed to Diana Rigg:

I became an icon for the feminist movement in America. I still get people writing to me or coming to see me and saying “you were a role model for me when I was a girl” and all that. It’s very sad that they had to take their role models off the television.  
(p. 51)

Rigg’s concern that the real world, and not an entertainment program, is the proper vehicle for establishing women’s identity somewhat misses the point, given that the images projected through these entertainment programs do propose, and depict, certain gender roles with the hope of engaging their audience and reflecting a cultural consensus. Further, the fact that Rigg attained icon status attests to the power of the medium to redefine identity. It further illustrates how women’s identity, as defined by the medium in general and police/detective programs in particular, was, for the most part, at that time limited to secondary roles, often in support of their husbands.

An early *Dragnet*, for example, depicted just such a character [a woman of secondary stature to her husband] in the image of Fay Smith, the wife of officer Frank Smith. She tended to the comforts of the male characters, serving them, helping with their



coats, asking after them. Her particular concern was her husband and his happiness. . . . She was competent, tolerant, and sacrificing. Her actions involved caring for the house and catering to the needs of other household members. (Meehan, 1983, p. 38)

In crime dramas women were often depicted as victims. Sochen (1987) asserts that from 1955 to 1965, of the 17 detective shows appearing on American television, only 6 featured recurring female characters. He also maintained that “women were usually the victims or the sexual diversions . . . [and] rarely were they the active brains on the operation or the physically powerful adventures. Women were to be protected from danger” (p. 99).

When women were given a measure of agency, they normally assumed either the role of a “bitch” or a “screwball,” a variation on the Nora Charles character in the popular movie series *The Thin Man*, a coworker, or a flirt.

An example of the first role, the “bitch,” can be found in a mid-1960s episode of *Dragnet*, titled “The Big High” (Vowell, 1967b), which served to reintroduce producer Jack Webb’s concept of the bitch into the series. Meehan (1983) defines the bitch in this series as, “strong-willed, selfish, and destructive. Her schemes were self-serving, as were

her standards” (p. 57). This description characterizes the young mother in the episode as she attempts to justify her private life—and her use of marijuana—to protagonist Joe Friday (Jack Webb). This character is a continuation of a role established in the early years of the series.

“*Dragnet* showed almost weekly versions of the bitch manipulating her husband, deceiving her landlord, disturbing the peace and police. . . . Yet, she was not opposition but a mere interruption” (pp. 57-58).

The “screwball” was much more than a mere interruption; she was the catalyst for the investigation. One example of that role was found in Barbara Britton’s portrayal of Pamela North in the 1950s series *Mr. And Mrs. North*. Although her husband (Richard Denning) was always present, it was Mrs. North “who seemed to stumble on an unsolved murder every week” (McNeil, 1991, p. 508), and was normally provided the direction needed for solving the crime. Although Britton’s character could be classified as the heroine of the series, her presentation was not a positive one. Her approach was more like a noisy next-door neighbor than an insightful detective. Further, the submissive nature of her husband left the impression that her flighty immersions into detective work were evidence of her eccentricity and were best dealt with by simply going along with her.

Female coworkers occupied a position similar to that of the wives; they served to support the male police/detectives in pursuit of their goals. Females were allowed to enter the workforce, but in secondary, primarily clerical, positions. Although they were portrayed as being efficient, such as Money Penny in the James Bond movies and Suzanne in *77 Sunset Strip*, they did not engage in the more dangerous pursuits of their male coworkers. Further, those women who assumed a more active role were given negative traits and negative ideology. “Female spies were employed by the enemy and accomplished their tasks with neither mental nor technological resources, but with the sexual use of their bodies—a more dangerous weapon than even the most creative of villains might dream up” (J. S. Miller, 2000, p. 51).

The concept of the flirtatious enemy agent—the femme fatale—became a staple of the genre. However, by the middle of the 1960s these flirtatious traits were extended to American females who actively entered into the work of espionage. As an example of this trend, Lichter et al. (1991) describe the role of Melanie, an American agent featured in the series *I Spy* in the following manner: “She flirts and teases her way into the villain’s lair, stretches out seductively in his bedroom, fends him off ‘since things might get out of hand,’ and emerges with both the top-secret microfilm and her virtue intact”(p. 70). Melanie can be

distinguished from the femme fatale enemy agent by the fact that she was not willing to engage in sex to achieve her goal. This sort of portrayal, while acknowledging the changing nature of sexual roles as reflected in American popular culture of the 1960s, also reinforced the notion that through participation in the actions demanded by these changing roles—even flirtation—the danger of unwanted sexual advances still existed. Further, although their virtue remains intact, a quality that was to become common only to those women with Western, pro-American backgrounds, the role of these active women was diminished by their reliance on sex rather than a more cerebral approach to achieve their objectives.

In 1965, a season before *The Avengers* appeared on the network, ABC aired *Honey West*, a series that featured a woman detective (Anne Francis) in the title role. Although the series allowed the lead to assume a role previously confined to males, it limited others' entry into this field. McNeil (1991) reports that she “took over the business after her father’s death” (p. 353), thus implying that her choice of profession was dictated more by the hard work of her father than by any ability that she might possess. Although her position was questioned from the outset, the character greatly expanded traditional female roles within the genre. It also attempted to provide its lead with certain traits reserved for males.

D'Acci (1997), in reviewing the series, recounts a scene from one episode in which West, after failing to escape from her assistant/boyfriend Sam Bolt (John Ericson) and a male lawyer, both of whom felt that her current assignment was too dangerous, fakes an injury to trap the two in her apartment while she pursues the case. While demonstrating the cunning associated with the flirtatious detective, the series expanded the role by creating a woman who takes control over her own life. The show also assigned elements of style associated with the single male detective to West. She drove a Cobra convertible with a mobile phone (an affectation that was incorporated into *The Avengers* series with Emma Peel driving a Lotus Elan), used the newest weapons, wore the latest fashions, and sported sunglasses. Even the sexual innuendoes presented within the narrative gave the impression “that this female protagonist might control her own desires as well as the narrative, and might wield power in the public sphere along with cars and weapons” (p. 82). However, according to D'Acci, West was also shown as a sex object. “Many of her ‘disguises’ called for a sexual flair, including those of a dance hall girl, a bare-legged cigarette girl, a ‘Polynesian’ waitress in a halter top, a ‘gypsy,’ and a German model; and during some episodes she also appeared in her bathtub” (p. 85).

The portrayal of Emma Peel in *The Avengers* was also objectified. Also, like West, much of the objectification was a result of the producer's wardrobe decisions. As an example, *Playboy* described the female lead in the series as "an erotic stylization, rather than a character, in pants suits, miniskirts and an incredible kinky wardrobe. . . . She karate-chops villains by the roomful, barely mussing her leather fighting suit" ("*The Avengers*—Jolly Good", 1967). However, at least part of this process was financially motivated. The fashions presented on the television program had such an impact on the public that they became a marketable commodity themselves. Peel's clothes were designed by John Bates at Jean Varon fashion designers, and copies were distributed throughout Europe with *The Avengers* logo. In fact, it was predicted that: "what with sensational outfits and television's hypnotic effect on the buying public, the Avengers clothes can't but be the success of the season" ("Your own Avenger," 1965). Yet the marketability of Mrs. Peel's fashions were merely a lucky spin-off for the producers. The casting of Diana Rigg, the choice of her wardrobe, and the development of the character's persona were designed to appeal to the male audience members—in fact, the character's name was derived from "man appeal" and shortened to "M appeal" and thus, Emma Peel (J. S. Miller, 2000, p. 54). The fact that she appropriated qualities associated with male

police/detectives/intelligent agents was secondary to the producer's goals. In fact, these perceived masculine qualities were designed not so much to act as a counterpoint to Peel's feminine features as to accentuate them. It was also the intention of the producers to present Mrs. Peel as non-threatening to the male audience as possible. Gamman (1988) describes the effect of the producer's vision:

Yet, even her karate chops never smudged the perfect make-up or disturbed Steed's admiring gaze at energetic sexual spectacle. . . . Her relationship with Steed was certainly sexual judging by the level of innuendo characteristic of their dialogue. Peel's athleticism and leather gear were vital components in a powerful representation of autonomous womanhood—but this image is not necessarily disturbing to men, partly because Peel's costume feeds into the pornographic scenario of fetishised male fantasies about women in leather, and partly because the underlying narrative structure of the series conspires against her outright independence. For even in those episodes where Peel does save Steed he maintains the upper hand because he usually *knows more* about the enigma being investigated. (p. 10)

Although Mrs. Peel assumed a secondary position in terms of the professional relationship she shared with Steed, the series and its female

lead found resonance among a young female audience in America, who looked on the portrayal of Mrs. Peel as a representation of a new type of independent woman. The producer's design and the American female fans' reactions can be demonstrated by examining the program titled "Epic" (Clemens, 1965/1966b), an episode that served as a parody of the era of silent movies. In this show Mrs. Peel is kidnapped by producer/director Z. Z. van Schnerk (Kenneth J. Warren), who assumes the stereotypical image of noted director Erich von Stroheim, yet has a design for an epic similar to *Intolerance* by D. W. Griffith. After fending off several attacks, all staged in different time periods, and secretly filmed, Mrs. Peel is finally subdued and learns the purpose of her kidnapping. Schnerk wants to make her a star (albeit by the end of production a deceased one), and in the process propel himself into the pantheon of "immortal movie makers."

In describing the qualities that attracted him to Mrs. Peel, the director uses three words: "courage, beauty, action." This simple phrase illustrates the compelling nature of the Peel character. The portrayal of women of courage was not new to the audience. However, the type of courage exhibited by Mrs. Peel and the matter-of-fact way she demonstrated this courage were different. Like the traditional frontier woman of the classic western genre, Mrs. Peel protected home and



family—England and its family of citizens—and in the process, traditional values. After all, she was a government agent. However, as this episode demonstrates, she also protected herself, assuming the position that her life had meaning and relevance apart from the role she was expected to play in society.

Mrs. Peel's beauty, or rather the attractive appearance and sensual nature of actress Diana Rigg, was intended to reward male viewers of the program; however, this presentation did not have a diminishing effect on the female audience. They were accustomed to seeing attractive women in various roles on television, and also, the Mrs. Peel character, like Honey West, represented a different appraisal of the role females could pursue in defining their own sexuality in the mid-1960s. Peel's sensual nature, including her wardrobe and her sexually charged banter with Steed, helped legitimize the notion of the new independent woman and thus presented an alternative image to the domestic, supportive picture of the woman that the genre had traditionally posited. The concept of a woman of action also reinforced the notion of an independent woman. The fact that Mrs. Peel was able to protect herself, and at times Steed, not only presented a juxtaposition of the traditional concept that the woman needs to be protected by a male, it also reinforced the conception that women could enter into the

workplace on a competitive level. While Gamman (1988) was correct in stating that “Steed maintains the upper hand because he usually *knows more* about the enigma being investigated” (p. 10), this process is more a matter of Mrs. Peel’s experience than her intelligence. This presentation also linked the program with the argument that women should receive equal pay for equal work, the one issue that then united the early women’s movement, and the only issue that most males could understand.

This linkage was extended throughout the program during the Rigg/Peel years. One example is “The See-Through Man” (Levene, 1967d) episode, which revolves around a fake formula for invisibility. At the beginning of the episode, Mrs. Peel is shown looking into a microscope and seeing the traditional “Mrs. Peel, We’re needed” message. Midway through the program, as the prospect of an invisibility formula becomes clear, Mrs. Peel is also shown with beakers, tubes, and burners—in other words, a full chemistry lab—in her apartment as she attempts to reconstruct the formula. These segments link the protagonist to Western scientific tradition, and, more importantly, impart the notion that Mrs. Peel, and by inference other women, can contribute on a meaningful intellectual level.

The director in “Epic” (Clemens, 1965/1966b) further described Mrs. Peel’s role, and appeal, in terms of three sets of seeming contradictions: “desperate [yet] strong,” “confused [yet] intelligent” and the ability to “fight back [yet] feminine.” The message is clear: a woman confronted with a desperate and/or confused situation could resolve that situation if she remained strong and intelligent and showed the ability to fight back, while at the same time remain feminine. However, true to the silent era parody and in true cliff-hanger fashion, this episode ends with Stead’s rescuing Mrs. Peel from a conveyor belt heading toward a saw blade. Yet he does not get the girl for his troubles but only a chair over his head, and the audience knows that Mrs. Peel will likely return the favor in the next episode.

The series presented a succession of strong, intelligent and independent women, even though at the time, the American audience was unaware of the Honor Blackman/Cathy Gale character. Almost every woman in the series is shown as strong and intelligent, although the villains, in most cases, are shown to be vicious and self-serving, and independence is a quality that seems to appear only in Western women. This femme fatale presentation of the villain had become standard within the genre by the time *The Avengers* aired in the United States, however, the program even deviated from this set formula. In “The Correct Way

to Kill” (Clemens, 1965/1966a), Steed is forced to exchange Mrs. Peel for a female Soviet agent in order to achieve a mutual goal. The Soviet agent (Anna Quayle) was at first presented as a female version of *Rocky and Bullwinkle’s* enemy Fearless Leader—a humorless, overly exaggerated killing machine. Yet, as the show progressed, this characterization is amended; the female agent becomes more human, and a feeling of loyalty and liking develops between the Steed and the substitute. The treatment of friendly women is even more pronounced. In “Never, Never Say Die” (Levene, 1967f) the audience is presented with an empowered female doctor (Patricia English) who aids Steed and Mrs. Peel, and in “The Superlative Seven” (Clemens, 1966d) Steed is rescued by a woman (Charlotte Rampling) who the narrative depicts as a world-class handgun expert. For the most part, at its initial airing the series presented a more positive image of women’s abilities than did other programs within the police/detective genre.

Although the general direction of presenting an active, modern woman continued, with the departure of Diana Rigg during the 1968/1969 season the series began to reemphasize the secondary position of the female agent. Also, what Dean (1967) called “the black-leather image of the Avengers,” popularized by the Honor Blackman and Diana Rigg characters, was modified to project a softer, more feminine,

yet still modern, look. The design of the new character, Tara King, also demonstrated a desire to revert back to the flirtatious model of female agents who “rely more on feminine guile than athletic skill” (Judge, 1968). This transition can be seen in the episode “The Forget-Me-Knot” (Clemens, 1968), which introduced the Tara King character and, in itself, provided a changing of the guard as Mrs. Peel and Ms. King pass on the stairs leading to Steed’s flat. Carraze et al. (1998) offer the following summary of the plot of this episode:

A secret agent has been hit with a dart from an air pistol, and now has amnesia. Steed and Emma try to jog his memory at Steed’s apartment, but without success. All he can mumble is that there is a traitor within the organization. Steed goes to inform Mother [his boss], while Emma, left in charge of the agent, is hit by a knock-out dart herself. Mother assigns Agent 69, Tara King, to assist, but not before she’s embarrassed herself by ambushing Steed by mistake. She gives Steed a note of her address and he returns to his apartment. Emma is still there, but the agent has gone, and so has part of Mrs. Peel memory. Steed decides to take Emma to Mother, but he’s hijacked on route and left drugged in a ditch. Now with amnesia himself, the only clue Steed has to his identity is Tara’s address. (p. 77)

In addition to failing to mention the fact that this is Emma Peel's final appearance on the series and serves to introduce Tara King to the audience, the summary also neglects to point out that, because he is drugged, Steed fails to keep an appointment with Mother and is suspected of being a double agent. This becomes important because King, unlike her superiors, questions the assumption that a venerated and legendary agent like Steed could switch sides, and she remains loyal to him. In fact, this veneration forms the basis for the early relationship between Steed and King. After King, in camouflage and black face, mistakenly attacks Steed during a training exercise, the two again meet in Mother's headquarters. This encounter is preceded by a series of quick shots showing King, now attired in a more traditional feminine outfit and wearing makeup, sneaking a series of looks at Steed from the door. Upon being discovered, King informs Steed of his legendary status and the awe in which all the new recruits hold the agent, being taught the "Steed Method" for this and the "Steed Method" for that. This adoration proves to be even more personal for King as she informs Steed that "[I] know everything about you." She is also willing to contribute to his "legendary" status, this time as a lady's man, by offering him her address. King's decision to offer herself to Steed in a secondary position extends to the professional level as well. After the case is solved, the

audience is informed that Mrs. Peel's husband was found along the Amazon, and King is assigned to become Steed's new partner, the old and new partners cross on the staircase. In a reversion to the secondary role of domestic servant, Mrs. Peel informs Ms. King that Steed likes his tea stirred counterclockwise, and King enters the flat and proceeds directly to the kitchen. Once again the female role is identified with domestic service to the male and, more importantly, the negation over sexual roles entered into by the characters in *The Avengers* has shifted to favor the male's dominant position. The only concession to the Blackman/Gale—Rigg/Peel projection of an independent woman is Thorson/King's two-story apartment—decorated in an eclectic Mod style, done in earth tones and featuring a collection of telephones, wall hangings of a large crown and a pair of eye glasses, a light-reflecting mobile, and a pool table—and the leather knee boots worn by Thorson/King during the final scene. This last image is modified by the rest of her outfit, which includes a light-colored, pair of culottes without a back and a leopard-skin coat.

Although this reversion back to a more traditional role for the female lead altered the equation through which the female fans were negotiating the program, it was not unexpected. For one thing, the producers needed to create a different image for their new lead in order

to differentiate her from her predecessors. Also, the pressure to produce programs featuring new images of women was not as great as it would become years later, when the direction and goals of the women's movement would be more widely known. In terms of television, the demographic category—a delineation that proves the importance of a group of individuals to the advertisers' marketing scheme—of “working women” was not even instituted by Neilson until July 1974 (A. Elliot, personal communication, February 11, 1999). In terms of the counterculture, the issues raised by the early women's movement, except for the egalitarian-sounding call for equal pay, were largely ignored by the male-orientated movement. Unfortunately, for a movement that called for the equality and spiritual and sexual liberation of all men, which implied the inclusion of women, there was an element of gender bias and hypocrisy in its goals. The only new image of women addressed by the counterculture was sexual in nature, and even here, a gender bias existed. In other words, for young males, the images and roles of American women were as traditional and negative as those of the older males who were responsible for writing and programming television.

Was the female lead in *The Avengers* designed to appeal to the female viewer? No, the character was designed to appeal to the male



viewer. As noted above, the choice of her name, Emma Peel or M appeal (short for male appeal), denotes her function. Other choices by the producers of the series, such as the casting of the attractive actress Diana Rigg in the role and the decision to continue to focus on a wardrobe dominated by leather, contributed to this function. Further, the fact that the character was objectified is not in doubt. In addition to the character's leather gear, she was featured in a harem outfit in "Honey for the Prince" (Clemens, 1965/1966a), black lingerie and a spiked collar in "A Touch of Brimstone" (Clemens, 1965/1966b), and in a see-through white net number was imprisoned in a large birdcage in "The Girl from Auntie (Marshall, 1965/1966a). In fact, it was the producers' intent that the urbane John Steed character would draw the female viewer. However, another question should be asked and answered. Did the Emma Peel character appeal to the female viewer? Yes, the character responded to a hidden need by the female audience for a new kind of role model. She was the intellectual equal to her male counterpart, and she did not need his protection. Therefore, in terms of the early women's movement and the pent-up frustration felt by many woman, and despite the fact that the producers had other designs, this series must be viewed as offering, at least to some of its female viewers, a vehicle for promoting a new, positive, and dynamic role for women.

## Conclusion

Chapter 1 identified several questions of concern for this study, one of which was Did the genre “hasten or delay” social change through its portrayal of images presented to the viewer during that period? The phrase “hasten or delay” was drawn from the following observation by Fiske (1987):

It is wrong to see it [television] as an originator of social change, or even to claim that it ought to be so, for social change must have its roots in material social existence; television can be, must be, part of that change, and effectively will either hasten or delay it. (p. 45)

In chapter 1 it was noted that the first part of this observation was designed to warn of the limitations of American television as an instrument of social change. This point needs to be reemphasized and examined. Like social change, for Fiske (1987), television programs have their “roots in material social existence”; that is, they serve an economic function (p. 45). As an entertainment delivery device, television functions to transport programs to a selected audience, one with enough disposable income to purchase the commodities and services that are advertised within the program. To properly undertake this function the providers of these programs attempt to produce

products that have a sustaining appeal to the public, but still can be differentiated from other products, or as Spigel and Curtin (1997) note: “Media institutions can sustain their power [over their viewers] only by constantly courting innovation and popularity” (pp. 8-9). By its nature then, television programs react to what is popular, and they do not lead the public in creating either taste or expression of ideas. However, these programs can reflect new trends in popular taste and political conscienceness as long as these new trends fall within the parameters of American hegemonic image. The programs examined in this chapter do fall within these parameters and do reflect new trends in America. The question then becomes not whether these programs hasten or delay social changes, but whether they are perceived in such a way as to offer those on the margins a means of identity and a hope for change in their social condition.

The series *I Spy* demonstrates just how difficult it is to ascertain whether a series can hastened or delayed change. It is clear that the series did make positive contributions in dismissing many of the negative stereotypes previously presented on television concerning the Black image. It also opened the medium to more Black actors. Further, through its presentation of the all-American, middle-class, educated Black citizen, the series did promote the acceptance of the policy of

integration. However, the series also promoted the assumption that all of Black society held the same attitudes and goals of mainstream White society, an assumption that was challenged by many Blacks, especially by an increasingly larger number of young Blacks through their call for “Black Power.” This challenge reflected a desire to redefine Black identity, promote Black culture and have pride in both the new identity and the culture. Thus, it can be argued that the series retarded or delayed the Black struggle for self-determination. Moreover, these divergent points of view rose from the same progressive beginnings, the nonviolent traditions of the American civil rights movement. The difficulties inherent in any assessment of whether the series hastened or delayed positive social change are reflected by Gray (1995) who comments: “In this moment of struggle over the signs of blackness and terms of a multicultural future it is more and more difficult to distinguish progressive political possibilities from neoliberal and conservative rewrites of the same old racial narratives” (pp. 162-163).

Perhaps, the best way to evaluate the impact of the series is again to turn to Hall’s (1980) account of how media texts are received and evaluated by their viewers. As a matter of review, Hall argued that program producers present texts that correspond to the dominant ideology. Because of their position in society, some viewers will

identify with the dominate ideology and accept the preferred meaning of the producers. These viewers produce a dominate reading of the media text. Other viewers, whose position in society will not allow them to identify with the dominate ideology, will form an opposition reading of text. However, the majority of viewers accept the dominant ideology in most cases, but acknowledge that elements exist in that ideology with which they cannot identify. They will produce a negotiated reading of the text and modify their perceptions of the program to reflect their specific concerns.

The majority of the White audience could identify with the preferred meaning of the producers because *I Spy* affirmed their belief that progress was being made concerning racial issues—if only because a Black man was starring in a television series—and demonstrated that the system could produce change without dramatic or radical intervention. Further, those Blacks who accepted the same social and economic goals of the White middle class could identify with the series and accept the preferred reading because it supported their view that through education and hard work their children could fully achieve all the benefits of American society. Those Blacks who were frustrated that the promises of liberal politicians did not agree with the reality of White middle-class America saw the series as promoting the notion that any

real hope for a change in the social condition of Blacks was dependent on their acceptance of the values of a traditional White lifestyle. These Blacks would maintain an oppositional reading of *I Spy*. However, many Blacks who might have questioned the pace of integration and/or questioned White middle class values could find enjoyment in the fact that the series pictured a Black man who appeared to be equal to his White counterpart and in some cases superior. In this regard, the series offered a means of identity for many Black viewers.

An examination of *The Avengers* demonstrates how a negotiated reading can produce a viewing pattern that opposes the preferred intent of the producers of the media text, but still offers enjoyment to the viewer.

The producers of *The Avengers* felt pressure to create a different image for their new female lead. However, this pressure was not the result of new demands for sensitivity from the fledging women's movement; rather, it came from the desire to differentiate her role from those of women on other crime programs. Further, the youth subculture, on the whole, did not address any change in gender roles except for the sexual liberation of women. With the exception of their mode of dress, and possibly the notion of marriage, many male members of the subculture supported traditional norms concerning the roles of American

women. It was the intention of the producers of *The Avengers* that the handsome and urbane John Steed character would appeal to female viewers, while the character of Emma Peel would draw young male viewers to the series. In order to fulfill this function the producers cast an attractive actress, Diana Rigg, in the role and dressed the character in leather, harem attire, black lingerie with a spiked collar, and a see-through white mess outfit in an attempt to objectify the character. Yet Mrs. Peel's character resonated among the female audience, who were eager to establish a new identity based on new role models. This new identity called for women to be intellectually equal to men and to have the ability to protect themselves, either physically or by using their cunning. The series also contributed to the expectation that such new roles lay in the future. Thus, through this negotiated reading, and despite the intentions of the producers, *The Avengers* can be said to have promoted social change.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE SUBCULTURE AND PRIME TIME: *THE MOD SQUAD*

There's battle lines being drawn  
Nobody's right if everybody's wrong  
Young people speaking their minds  
Getting so much resistance from behind  
I think it's time we stop, hey, what's that sound  
Everybody look what's going down  
—Stephen Stills, “For What It’s Worth”

In the late 1960s, a many young people were “speaking their minds,” about U. S. involvement in Vietnam, civil rights, drug use, free love, and the general state of American society. Because many of the opinions expressed by these young people amounted to a rejection of most of the traditional values and the dominant economic ideology of the United States, battle lines were being drawn. For some television producers such as *Dragnet*'s Jack Webb, it was easy to determine what side was right: the side which stood behind traditional values. However, other producers—those concerned with the values of America's dominant economic ideology—saw the advantage of trying to capture the market populated by young people. However, this proved to be a difficult task, because, as Spigel and Curtin (1997) point out, in terms of



the 1960s youth perception, television was part of the problem. It not only maintained the American system through promoting its values in entertainment programming, but it was also as an active participant in creating consumer demand. In other words, television was seen as a vehicle that not only attempted to homogenize consumption but also attempted to homogenize American society (pp. 1-4). These attitudes were even more dramatic in crime programming, because the individuals depicted in these shows were perceived as agents of the system under attack. Marc and Thompson (1992) described the dilemma facing television as a whole, and the police/detective genre in general:

During the late sixties, advertisers were anxious to court the emerging population bulge of eighteen-to-thirty-four-year-old boom babies. But this seemingly straightforward marketing problem had been complicated by the political and cultural turbulence of the late sixties. How could a mass story-telling medium such as television appeal to both the young and to their parents, when the two generations seemed locked into an endless cycle of confrontations over questions of war and peace, responsibility and freedom, and conformity and personal expression? The phrase “law and order” had, itself, become a buzzword for a political agenda. (pp. 164-165)

The purpose of this chapter is to examine how television confronted this dilemma through the development of new police/detective dramas that attempted to address the rifts in the system brought on by the youth movement. This chapter concentrates on the images that *The Mod Squad* presented as accurate representations of youth in the late 1960s.

#### Mod Squad and the Portrayal of the Youth Subculture

Aaron Spelling approached the problem of attracting a young audience to the police/detective genre, and at the same time legitimizing crime show to this audience, by developing a program that revolved around a group of hip young people who were undercover cops. This group was composed of an upper middle-class White male (Pete Cochrane, played by Michael Cole), a young White woman (Julie Barnes/Peggy Lipton), a young Black man from the ghetto (Linc Hayes/Clarence Williams III), and their supervisor (Captain Adam Greer/Tige Andrews). The show was *The Mod Squad* (Marc & Thompson, 1992, p. 165; McNeil, 1991, p. 514). Spelling's intention was clearly delineated by the show's early promotional material, which observed that "the police don't understand the now generation and the now generation doesn't dig the fuzz" (Marc & Thompson, 1992, p. 165), and offered a solution—and the premise for the program—which was to

“ find some swinging young people who live the beat scene and get them to work for the cops” (pp. 165-166).

Although the terms *now generation* and *the beat scene* were already becoming outmoded by the time the series was promoted, the *Mod Squad* was Spelling’s first ratings success, finishing number 11 in the 1970-1971 season (Marc & Thompson, 1992, p. 164). It also received six Emmy Award nominations after its first season” (p. 166).

The reaction to the show ranged from favorable assessments of its format and message—“*The Mod Squad* was one of the early series to combine elements of the rebel hero with an awareness of what young people were thinking in the midsixties” (Rovin, 1977, p. 121)—to criticism of the same format and message:

[The young people in the program were] literally co-opted by the law enforcement establishment, the kids making up the Mod Squad emblemized a desperate effort to shanghai the counterculture back into the mainstream. Leather jackets, long hair, and love beads camouflaged, for a time, a truth about the ambiguity of righteously justified law enforcement in an increasingly unstructured and free thinking society.” (Rushoff, 1994, p. 47)

In this program Spelling introduced the themes of the rehabilitation of rebellious youth (all the members of the Mod Squad had committed criminal acts and their participation in the squad constituted a second chance) and their assimilation back into society and the ability of that society to strengthen itself through a more benevolent and flexible approach toward its youth. These themes support Fiske and Hartley's (1978) notion that television serves as a bardic mediator. The first theme allows for the subjects of the series, the three youth, to "be clawed back into a socio-central position" (p.87) in society. The second theme exposes a "practical inadequacies in the culture's sense of itself" (p.87), and offers "a reorientation in favor of a new ideological stance" (p.88).

The new subculture first came to the public attention on September 6, 1965, when San Francisco *Examiner* reporter Michael Fallon described a coffeehouse in the Haight-Ashbury district of the city as the "new hip hangout" (Stern & Stern, 1990, p. 148). The hippie subculture quickly expanded from a coffeehouse to include portions of the entire nation. By 1968, the year *The Mod Squad* premiered on television, the fact that the American youth movement was producing a counterculture " was an established fact in the minds of most Americans. The media had reported that 1967 was the "Summer of Love" and that thousands of long-haired, outrageously clothed young people were

flocking to San Francisco's Haight-Asbury district to become active participants in a new lifestyle. The allure of this new life-style was not limited to California. It was also reported that these hippies—a new term devised to describe the members of this subculture—participated in the “Great Easter Be-In,” an event in New York City organized to celebrate many of the aesthetic aspects of this new subculture (Morrison & Morrison, 1987, pp. 339-344). Nor was the spread of this subculture limited to the urban coastal centers of the country. Stylistic elements of the hippies could be seen in most local colleges and high schools. To understand the process whereby these styles were incorporated and ultimately, coopted, into the visual messages of American television in general and crime programs in particular, it is necessary once again look to Hebdige (1991), for a definition of a spectacular subculture. He uses this term to differentiate those movements that have the potential to disturb the existing order from those that have only the potential simply to irritate the system; for example, e.g. the “beat generation” of the preceding decade. He described the relationship between a spectacular subculture and culture in general in the following terms:

[A] spectacular subcultures express forbidden contents  
(consciousness of class, consciousness of difference) in  
forbidden forms (transgression of sartorial and behavioral codes,

law breaking, etc.) They are profane anticipation, and they are often and significantly defined as “unnatural.” (pp. 91-92)

All the elements of Hebdige’s (1991) definition were in place during the late 1960s. The hippies’ dress and lifestyle choices represented a “transgression of sartorial and behavioral codes” (pp. 91-92). The participation of many members of this group in antiwar protests, some of which led to confrontations with the police, demonstrated the potential for “law breaking” that Hebdige mentioned. The media’s presentation of this new lifestyle also prompted many older Americans to proclaim the hippies as “unnatural” (pp. 91-92). Hebdige described the emergence of this spectacular subculture as being followed by an ambivalent “wave of hysteria in the press” (p. 92): ambivalent because “it fluctuates between dread and fascination, outrage and amusement” (pp. 92-93). Hebdige goes on to state that “style in particular provokes a double response; it is alternately celebrated (in the fashion page) and ridiculed or reviled (in those article which define subcultures as social problems)” [p. 93]. Typically, the excess of certain members of the subculture are linked with the subculture itself. However, the role of the media does not stop here. After dismantling the subculture, the media has the power to redefine and soften its meaning. This process only begins when the marketplace begins to accept the

meanings of the subculture's commodities. Once this economic function begins, it generates acceptability, and the members of the subculture are recuperated back into mainstream culture. The television series *The Mod Squad* represents the first stage—and as such, a case study—in such a recuperation process for, as Marc & Thompson (1992) point out:

[Series producer, Aaron] Spelling left viewers with two extremely optimistic messages: the young were assured that their idealism would be redeemed not by revolt but by integration into the system; the old were reassured that the center would hold against the implied threat of youthful anarchy. (p. 166)

This message was intended to reassure the mainstream audience more than the members of the subculture. Although the series attempted to define the members of the Mod Squad as idealistic and as an accurate representation of young people in the country at that time in the hope of legitimizing the squad to the program's youth audience, the producer's primary vehicle for gaining acceptance was their use of stylistic element of the subculture within the program and the association of these elements with the members of the squad. "*The Mod Squad*, indeed strived [sic] mightily for the look and feel of sixties" (p. 166), however, there is a question as to the extent of their success. In order to evaluate this question it is necessary to examine the environmental presentation,

that is, the *mise-en-scene* of the program, the characterization of the principle players, the underlying theme and ideology inherent in the production, and ultimately the ability of the program to soften the image of the subculture for mainstream America.

In appraising the program's environmental presentation, three aspects will be examined: the costumes, the sets and the dialogue. However, before judging the verisimilitude of these elements, it is necessary to establish a criterion for measurement. Stern & Stern (1990) describe the early participants in the hippie subculture as wearing

thrift-shop Victorian shawls, low-slung mod bell-bottoms, and mind-blowing paisleys. They combined bowler hats, fringe jackets, and western boots, they carried foppish canes. Their hair was wild and unruly, their beards full instead of neatly trimmed. They swooned about life with hyperbole borrowed from San Francisco's campy underground. (pp. 148-149)

Although in the later years of the decade "a large faction of the movement began dropping the beads, bangles, and bright clothes for a more ascetic look" (p. 152), much of the domestic decor of the members of the subculture retained the flamboyant features of the earlier period.

Although the wardrobe obviously changed from scene to scene, the overall feel of the style that the series was attempting to project can



be identified through examining the opening credit sequence. Here the action inherent within the program is demonstrated by the appearance, one at a time, of the three principle young characters ducking and running under through what appears to be a run down warehouse. Their attire changed throughout the run of the series, however, in the original sequence Pete (the young White male) is shown wearing dark slacks, a light suit coat, a light blue button down collared shirt and a dark turtle neck undershirt. He appears more like a smartly dressed fraternity man in college than a hippie—no fringe jacket, no bell bottom jeans, and, above all, no wild or unruly hair. Linc, the young Black male, does appear a little more hip, wearing a light weight jacket, which seems to be a cross between the fifties Eisenhower golf jacket and the sixties Nehru jacket, zipped up to the neck with the collar turned up. However, this image is somewhat diminished by the gray dress slacks he is also wearing. Julie, the female lead, does make a minor concession to hippie style by wearing bell bottom pants, however, this fashion statement is part of an ensemble dark pant suit in the mod, not hippie, style featuring a coat with wide collars and a white turtle neck sweater. Although in later introductory sequences Pete is shown wearing a light blue paisley shirt, the shirt is subdued and by no means mind-blowing and is color coordinated with the rest of his outfit. This is a projection of

middle class, well dressed and well groomed youth and not the hippies shown on the news.

The only concession to the hippie style was *The Mod Squad's* adaptation of certain phrases that the producers and writers associated with the subculture. This was done with limited success. An example of the correct usage of a subculture phrase can be found in "A Short Course in War" (Rubin, 1971b), a story dealing with a campus takeover by young dissidents. The phrase "right on" is repeatedly used and refers to the correctness of the dissidents' political intentions. However, some of the dialogue dubiously reflected the jargon of the times. In the episode "A Run for the Money" (Lakso, 1969) Pete is shown discussing his relationship with a new girlfriend, played by Lesley Ann Warren. Pete, in obvious elation over his new relationship, asks the Warren character: "Where did you come from?" She responds in a nonsensical manner: "The left side of nowhere . . . five days and four hours ago . . . and they said it wouldn't last." This exchange was intended to reflect the tendency of many hippies to swoon "about life with hyperbole borrowed from San Francisco's campy underground" (Stern & Stern, 1990, p. 149); however, while the new sexual awareness that characterized the decade did promote rapidly escalating sexual relationships, explaining the "five days and four hours" reference, but the "left side of nowhere"

observation was obscure, even for a hippie. In other cases, the dialogue lacked the quality of producing a linkage with members of the subculture. In the first episode of the series, “The Teeth of the Barracuda (Barrett, 1968), in an attempt to establish his credentials as a rebel, Pete informs Captain Greer that he will not “fink” on another young person and that he will “set his own rules.” The dialogue also includes the phrases “I got to be me,” and “that’s my bag.” These phrases were outdated when the show aired and reflect more of a 1950s James Dean rebel outlook than the 1960s hippie. Like Jack Webb, Spelling and his writing staff showed a limited knowledge of the subculture. However, unlike Webb, the production team behind *The Mod Squad* was attempting to rehabilitate the image of young people and limit their perceived threat, and in the process, maintain the mainstream adult audience that most programs of the genre enjoyed while drawing new, youthful viewers to the program.

In order to achieve this balancing act the members of the Mod Squad “could not just act cool, they had to *be* cool while enforcing the law” (Rushoff, 1994, p. 47). It was hoped that the beginnings of this process would be found in the makeup of the team, one young Black male, one young White female, and one young White male, and the circumstances through which they joined the police force. Undoubtedly

the most stylistically cool member of the squad was Linc Hayes, who was cast as a former Black militant who now saw the value of the American justice system. His “militant credentials included an Afro-haircut, aviator sunglasses, and an arrest during the Watts riots” (Lichter et al., 1991, p. 237). This portrayal not only offered the young viewer an image of a cool young Black man, it also rehabilitated the negative image of the ghetto youth and offered reassurance to the White mainstream audience that the American justice system was egalitarian in nature. Although the series did extend what Gray (1997) termed “the civil rights subject”—“those black, largely middle-class benefactors who gained the most visibility [on television] . . . from the struggles and opportunities generated by the civil rights movement” (p. 353)—to include poorer young Blacks, the fact remains that, following the stereotype created by earlier television shows, Linc was a “second banana,” and served as a foil for the young White male, Pete. In fact, the series even reverted to an earlier era of Black representation, showing a reasonably well-educated Black man who cannot help but revert back to slang. In “Keep the Faith, Baby” (Bennett, 1969), an episode in which “the Squad is assigned to protect the life of a militant black priest [played by Sammy Davis, Jr.], threatened by a murderer who is afraid he will break the seal of confession” (Martindale, 1991, p. 333), the Davis

character, after deliberating his situation, utters the phrase “Gots ta do it, Jesus.” This phrase serves no purpose except to remind the audience of former stereotypes and stands in contradiction to the pensive and adroit character that the show has already established.

The representation of women in the series is not any better than that of Blacks. “The female [Julie], played by Peggy Lipton, was part of the team but was not the central character in the adventure” (Sochen, 1987, p. 99). In fact, Julie’s role in the series was demonstrated by the introductory sequence to every episode. After an introduction of each character, Julie being last, the trio unites. Julie is shown with a look of apprehension, and both Pete and Link comfort her in a protective embrace. The message is clear: Julie is a beautiful young woman, who, like all women, needs to be protected. Although this theme continues throughout the series, at least, after the first episode, “The Teeth of the Barracuda (Barrett, 1968), in which Julie is continuously shown wearing a bikini swimsuit, she becomes less objectified, wearing normal street clothes.

The main character is the young White male, Pete. Like the others he found himself on the wrong side of the law and “agreed to join the force, but only if . . . never required to betray the confidence of friends, or carry guns” (Rovin, 1977, p. 121). This mantra, especially

the desire not to “fink” on other young people, was most generally expressed by the White male, Pete, who assumed the position of the group’s leader. Although Pete sometimes came across as a spoiled rich kid, a condition for which Linc, the Black male, called him to task on several occasions, it was Pete who questioned the Captain, and it was Pete who generally acted as the catalyst for the group’s actions. His exchange with Captain Greer in “The Teeth of the Barracuda (Barrett, 1968) has already been reviewed. In this episode “Greer puts his newly formed squad to work investigating a cop killing, which the evidence suggests was the work of young people” (Martindale, 1991, pp. 331-332). Pete’s reluctance to “fink” on a girl who was a friend of his appears to jeopardize the investigation. However, Pete feels that his actions are justified. In fact, his intransigence leads the trio to break into a popular nightclub to look for evidence. The consequences of this totally illegal search are a lecture from the Captain and a warning not to do it again. This fast and loose formula for law enforcement, in which the end justifies the means, especially when protecting another young person, was a feature of the production. According to Carlson (1985), the producer of *The Mod Squad* claimed that legal accuracy was not a high priority:

On our show we feel we can break the rules to some extent when it's dramatically necessary. For instance in a plot situation where the Mod Squad are in desperate need of some piece of information—where there is some life-and-death reason for acting fast, you know—we don't mind having them search somebody's home without going through all the required legal procedures. (p. 34)

Another element in the formula for the show was that "*The Mod Squad* often infiltrated counterculture institutions in order catch the evil adults who corrupted young people" (Sochen, 1987, p. 99). An example of this narrative device can be found in the episode discussed above in which the young girl is tricked into taking LSD by a man who intends to exploit her incoherent state, take a series of revealing photographs, and blackmail her father. This entire plan is the brainchild of the adult owner of the popular night spot. However, even as the young people fall prey to adults in *The Mod Squad*, there is one other dimension to the series: "The counterculture activities are still plainly wrong" (Rushoff, 1994, p. 47). The use of LSD was associated with the free-wheeling single's lifestyle and by inference with the subculture, which was not much of an exaggeration considering that the drug was openly embraced by many of its members. Also, the drug was demonized. Not only was

usage of the drug equated with loss of inhibition and memory, it was suggested that its usage could alter a person's ability to distinguish between correct and immoral behavior. Also, like the LSD episode of *Dragnet*, the drug was equated with death. When Pete calls a doctor to attend to the girl after he discovers her drugged and nude body, the physician tells the audience that any further usage will probably result in death. The series did not stop at attacking the subculture's totems; it also attacked its institutions. In "The Guru" (Chapman, 1968) the trio "pose as hippies in order to investigate the bombing of an underground newspaper" (Martindale, 1991, p. 323), only to discover that the charismatic editor and purported defender of subculture values has not only burned down the paper but also committed murder and in the process involved a young, idealistic, female assistant in his plan. The linkage of this unprincipled, power-hungry individual with the underground press called into question the value of that press. It also promoted the notion that, while many young people who got involved with such political endeavors might have been well meaning, they could be easily manipulated into unwise actions. This, of course, parallels the argument that was being advanced in conservative circles at the time that the youth movement was being manipulated by agents of international Communism. The series also took aim at mainstream liberalism. In



“Mother of Sorrow” (Larkin & Woods, 1970) “Pete tries to clear an old school buddy of the murder of his girlfriend” (Martindale, 1991, p. 335), only to discover that his friend was mentally disturbed and did commit the crime. Much of the blame for the young man’s problems was attributed to the indifference of his rich, liberal, New-Age mother. The obvious message is that the young man’s condition could have been modified by the timely intervention of his mother with a display of more traditional family values, a conservative catchphrase, then as now, instead of engaging in a selfish attempt to empower herself.

Sochen (1987) contends that “the main purpose of the show, as noted by some observers, was to co-opt the youth movement of the late 1960s” (p. 99), and the examples cited above would tend to support this assertion. However, the program was not designed to appeal to the members of the subculture who would not identify with the style, dialogue, characterizations, or messages of the production. The youth audience that the show was designed to attract was younger and still positioned to spend their parent’s disposable income, and the mainstream adult audience. To attract these sectors of the audience the program first attempted to reinforce and assure the mainstream audience that their negative conceptions about the subculture were justified, and then the show tried to rehabilitate, rather than coopt, the young members

of that subculture. The episode “A Short Course in War” (Rubin, 1971b) offers a good example of how both objectives were achieved. In this show “a group of student activists take over their college campus administration building, with Julie and an elderly teacher as hostages” (Martindale, 1991, p. 337). At the beginning of this episode, the audience witnesses a group of students who verbally disrupt the elderly teacher’s (Josephine Hutchinson) class. The rudeness of the students is in marked contrast to the inquiring concern of the teacher, who wishes to understand the students’ demands, and of Julie, who calls for moderation and a return to normal class decorum. The conflict is resolved as both the teacher and Julie are shouted down and leave the classroom. This introductory sequence reinforced the mainstream belief that campus disruptions were caused by agitators who were not interested in learning. The students’ image is further harmed as they occupy the administration building and unnecessarily destroy files, damage property, and take the teacher and Julie hostage. However, the students’ rehabilitation begins when one lonely student—an outsider distinguished from the other students by his short hair and traditional dress—makes his presence felt. This “freaked-out guy”—Link’s description—produces an assortment of weapons, and the situation turns violent. The students reject violence and begin to see the error of their ways when they themselves become

hostage. The rehabilitation of the student image continues as they courageously aid the teacher, who later dies of a heart attack, by creating a diversion so that Linc and Pete can facilitate a rescue. The preferred readings leave the audience with two messages. First, the students are not bad, but misguided, and, second, their protests can lead to situations they cannot control. For this reason, protests, and by implication, other political activities must be judged more seriously than as mere youthful indiscretions. This point is reinforced by the ending of the show when the now contrite leader of the initial protest asks a sympathetic Captain Green for an opportunity to speak with Julie before he is taken to jail. After hearing that the young man regrets the outcome of the confrontation, Julie hands him the lesson for the teacher's next class. It was based on an admission from the Greek gods to the people that those who lack courage will be oppressed; those who create violent situations will die in those violent encounters; and only those who love will prosper. This ending links Julie, the teacher, the Mod Squad, and the system with the subculture—"the love generation"—and conveys the notion that only through participation within the system can change take place and only through acceptance of the system can total rehabilitation occur.

Were these messages being received by the members of the subculture? Probably not. For one thing, it would have been difficult of most members of the subculture to identify with the program. Like Spelling's hit of a later decade, *90210*, which featured his version of high school life, the world surrounding the Mod Squad members was fabricated and had little to do with reality. The costumes and set design were too formal and expensive for any meaningful representation of the hippie lifestyle. In fact, the lifestyle resembled more that of the California surf set than it did the lifestyle the people who populated Haight-Ashbury. It would also be difficult for members of the youth subculture to identify with the characterizations of the trio. Most hippies indulged in drugs and as a result distrusted the police and their undercover agents, *The Mod Squad's* tendency towards infiltration would not diminish that distrust. The messages the series presented were simplistic and insulting to members of the subculture. A good example is the episode "A Short Course in War" (Rubin, 1971b) discussed above, in which political protest resulted in violence and innocent death. Although there were elements within the subculture who favored political violence, as there were also elements within mainstream America who also leaned in that direction, the basic direction of political protest came from a nonviolent tradition. There is

little causal linkage between protests and violence, and where the linkage existed, violence was generally not initiated by the protesters. Further, unlike the *Dragnet* series, which provided similar messages and whose production techniques offered its viewers the capacity for reading an alternative message, *The Mod Squad*, because of its attempted manipulation of subculture style and catch phrase morals, and the fact that its main characters were “narcs,” or “snitches”—people not to be trusted--offered little room for gratification for members of the subculture.

Did the program have an effect on the subculture in general? No, at least not directly. The show did, to a minor extent, aid in facilitating a general acceptance of the style associated with the subculture. However, these stylistic elements, clothes, hairstyle, and decorative items, were modified and emphasized higher quality as well as higher prices than the original products. Yet, once these products were appropriated and public acceptance encouraged, one area of subculture identity was placed in question. This appropriation of commodities also contributed to the future shift of identity from the communal nature of the hippies to the more materialistic concerns of the yuppies. *The Mod Squad* did contribute to this process; however, it did not represent a cultural

phenomenon and was merely a minor player in the general absorption of the subculture.

### Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to demonstrate how *The Mod Squad* appropriated certain stylistic elements associated with the youth subculture and through that device increase its youth audience. The series also associated its youthful cast with both conservative traditional values and one of the primary institutions setup to protect and maintain those values, the police department. The show presented a middle class version of the subculture, and was designed to appeal to the mainstream and the majority of the youth, not in the subculture. In framing its audience, the producers of *The Mod Squad* appear to have succeeded for the series rose in the ratings to number 11 during the 1970-1971 season (McNeil, 1991, p. 1054). Although it is doubtful that many members of the subculture were drawn to the program, the ingredients were there to provide pleasure for young people who accepted the mainstream notion that the hippie lifestyle was full of excesses, but who still realized that certain stylistic elements of that subculture, such as long hair and bell-bottom jeans, were “cool” in the eyes of their contemporaries. The ingredients were also there to reassure a mainstream adult audience of the correctness of their values and to offer a measure of relief that

common ground could be worked out between the generations. This series serves as an example of how a television program attempts to present themes which allow for a portion of the audience to claw themselves back to a position in the culture near enough the center that they can be recuperated. *The Mod Squad* also demonstrates how a television program can perform the fifth of Fiske and Hartley's (1978) bardic functions and

*expose . . . any practical inadequacies in the culture's sense of itself which might result from changed conditions in the world out-there, or from changed conditions in the world out-there, or from pressure within the culture for a reorientation in favor of a new ideological stance. (p. 88)*

However, to assume that the series provided a temporizing image of the youth subculture or a softening of the social attitudes of the general public toward the subculture, or moved the members of the subculture toward the mainstream, denies both the progressive nature of the subculture and the basically conservative message of the series. Through its attempts to subvert the stylistic elements associated with the subculture, *The Mod Squad* hoped to reinforce traditional attitudes toward race and gender. Although the principals resembled hippies, they

still functioned in a world that was dominated by a White male, with both the White female and the Black male assuming secondary positions.

It is interesting to note that of the various crime programs that emerged in the middle to late 1960s, and that attempted to reflect the rifts in American society, the series that did not directly address the tensions brought to the forefront during this time was *The Avengers*, which offered its viewers a vehicle to justify social change. On the other hand, the series that most clearly adopted the aesthetics of the decade, *The Mod Squad*, was the most regressive.



## CHAPTER 6

### THEY'VE GIVEN THEM A NUMBER:

#### FIVE-0, NUMBER 6 AND THE CULMINATION OF THE 1960S

Come on all of you big strong men,  
Uncle Sam needs your help again,  
He's got himself in a terrible jam  
Way down yonder in Vietnam  
So put down your books and pick up gun.  
We're gonna have a whole lotta fun.

And it's one, two, three,  
What are we fighting for?  
Don't ask me, I don't give a damn,  
Next stop is Vietnam;  
And, it's five, six, seven,  
Open up the pearly gates,  
Well there ain't no time to wonder why.  
Whoopee! We're all gonna die.

Come on mothers throughout the land,  
Pack your boys off to Vietnam.  
Come on fathers, don't hesitate,  
Send your sons off before it's too late.  
You can be the first one on your block  
To have your boy come home in a box.  
— “Country” Joe McDonald, “I Feel Like I’m Fixin’ to Die Rag”

McDonald's (1965) anti-war song spoke to the frustration concerning Vietnam that an increasingly large number of young people felt in the late 1960's. It also reflected the increasing concern felt by many

mainstream members of American society, especially parents, about the large number of casualties produced by that war; too many of these parents were having their boys “come home in a box.” In 1968, the year that the two series reviewed in this chapter, *Hawaii Five-0* and *The Prisoner*, premiered on American television, support for the war was declining. This process began with the Communists’ Tet Offensive in South Vietnam, where they took the war out of the jungles and attacked over 100 cities, including Saigon. This offensive called into question the notion that Communist expansion was contained and that an end to the war was in sight. The turmoil over the war also affected domestic American politics; not only were there increasing numbers of anti-war demonstrations, but within the mainstream political parties anti-war feelings were being expressed. Many young people “came clean for Gene” and helped Minnesota Senator Eugene McCarthy, an anti-war candidate, lodge a major protest vote in the New Hampshire presidential primary. The year also saw other turbulent events, including the assassinations of civil rights leader Martin Luther King and anti-war Senator Robert F. Kennedy after his victory in the California primary. Students also occupied Columbia University, and the Democratic Convention in Chicago was the scene of what would officially be called a police riot, in which both demonstrators and bystanders were injured. The year concluded with increasing student protests and the election of Richard

Nixon (with his “secret peace plan”) as president, defeating Hubert Humphrey, President Johnson’s vice president, who also was forced to question the war.

Television was also affected by the events of 1968, as it had been by the trends that had emerged since the early 1960s. Television’s news-gathering divisions were directly affected, reporting on the war and showing daily coverage of its effects on both American soldiers in Vietnam and the civilian population back home. These effects also influenced entertainment programs, and the crime show genre, as well. Programs would continue to reflect cold war concerns, like *The Untouchables* of the early 1960s; however, these concerns were redefined in terms of America’s involvement in Vietnam. Instead of alluding to these concerns through drawing parallels between criminal activity and foreign threats, they began directly to confront the rifts within American society. *Dragnet*, for instance, took a position in complete support of traditional American values and questioned the lifestyles of those who opposed both the war and American institutions. This tradition was continued in 1968 with the introduction of *Hawaii Five-0*. This series also reflected a shift in cold war perceptions, with the threat to America from the Soviet Union moving to the Asian continent. Although this series presented a text that promoted a conservative social reading, it also, in Fiske and Hartley’s (1978) words, sought “to expose . . . any

practical inadequacies in the culture's sense of itself which might result from changed conditions in the world out-there" (p. 88).

Numbers also affected television. The entire revenue system of the industry was based on ratings numbers and in order to sustain high numbers, television programmers relied on proven successful formulas in designing their offerings. Yet these programs had to be at least a little different from other shows in their same category. Such differentiation could also bring additional viewers to the show. In the early 1960s one potential source for a new audience was American youth, and because this group represented a new revenue stream for advertisers, the importance of the youth market grew. The producers of crime (police/detective) dramas also saw the potential for this market. In designing programs such as *77 Sunset Strip* they hoped to attract more young people while still appealing to an older, more mainstream audience.

One mechanism that the program used to attract a youthful audience was to portray the principal detectives on the program as members of a new subculture that gained prominence during the late 1950s and early 1960s in American society—the playboy. Compared to the image advanced by the subculture's chief proponent, *Playboy* magazine, these detectives presented a sanitized version of the playboy, with ties to the American intelligence establishment and a faith in the institution of marriage. Yet the series did

acknowledge a new marginal lifestyle. On television, both social and lifestyle concerns also continued throughout the decade as rifts within the system and the new youth subculture emerged. Gender rifts reflecting female perception of their roles, sexual and professional, in American society began to surface. At first, these concerns were expressed through subtle looks and mannerisms as composed by female directors such as Ida Lupino in the *77 Sunset Strip* series, but soon graduated into negotiated readings of such series as *Honey West* and *The Avengers* into new female role models. The racial tensions in American society was addressed by *I Spy*, which cast television's first Black action hero and attempted to construct a more positive, homogeneous picture of America through embracing the principles of the civil rights movement. Although this presentation was new to television, the text of the program still supported the authority relationships that maintained American society. Similarly, although *The Mod Squad* attempted to embrace the stylistic elements of the youth subculture, it also promoted the maintenance of traditional, White, male, middle-class, values. In 1968 one series on American television. *The Prisoner*, did not embrace those stylistic element of the subculture, but it did embrace many of its ideological concerns.

The remainder of this chapter examines these two series *Hawaii Five-0* and *The Prisoner*, focusing on how these programs presented issues

that reflected the social concerns that dominated political discourse in the late 1960s.

#### The Subculture Receives a Message: *Hawaii Five-0*

*Hawaii Five-0* was a program about an imaginary special investigative unit directly sanctioned by the governor of Hawaii (Rovin, 1977, p. 121). It was the longest running police/detective program in television history (Robards, 1985, p. 16), beginning on September 26, 1968, and running through April 5, 1980 (Rhodes, 1996).

Like *Hawaiian Eye*, the sister show of *77 Sunset Strip*, which aired earlier in the decade, *Hawaii Five-0* was set in the country's 50<sup>th</sup> state; however, it was the first to be filmed in that location (Martindale, 1991, p. 203). The location proved "tremendously satisfying visually" (Amory, 1968, p. 1) and has been credited with much of the show's success. Whether it was the location or the fact that the protagonist was always successful in "booking" or capturing his opponents—the phrase "Book 'em, Dan-O," referring to the hero's orders to his subordinate to incarcerate the criminals and which appeared at the end of many episodes, has become synonymous with the program—the series proved to be a rating success, finishing in the top 25 seasonal ratings eight times and four times in the top 10 ratings (Martindale, 1991, p. 203-204).

Like *Dragnet*, the series did not avoid the social issues that confronted the nation during the 1960s, and also like the Webb production, the series provided a distinctive point of view concerning those issues. C. Anderson (1987) describes the process and the results in the following manner: “Weathering the countless social changes that occurred over its run, the Five-0 team staved off all forces that threatened to contaminate our nation’s Paradise” (p. 136). Lichter et al. (1991) equates *Hawaii Five-0* with both *Dragnet* and *The Untouchables* in that the series “presented the police officer as moralist” (p. 209). In fact, the righteous indignation demonstrated by the show’s protagonist, Steve McGarrett, was described in terms similar to those of Joe Friday and Elliot Ness:

In *Hawaii Five-0*, Steve McGarrett’s relentless pursuit of criminals alternated with personal outrage whenever they were not incarcerated. McGarrett and his men had no sympathy for any wrongdoing. Lawbreakers had to pay for their deeds, and McGarrett made their capture into a mission. Like Elliot Ness, he often referred to criminals as “punks” or “scum.” (p. 210)

This appraisal was shared by Robards (1985), who states that “Steve McGarrett, played by Jack Lord, stands solidly in the ‘Sgt. Friday’ tradition of no-nonsense, stoical authority figures” (p. 16).

Also like *The Untouchables*, the *Hawaii Five-0* series was criticized for its dependence on violence. The series was cited several times for its violent content in the special report of the House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce on Sex and Violence on Television (U.S. Congress, 1977, pp. 363-365, 370-371). Further, in 1974, the National Association for Better Broadcasting complained that *Hawaii Five-0* was

a very bad show for youngsters of all ages, strategically scheduled to lure a very large youth audience. Graphic horror. Such things as a close-up on a girl as she dies horribly from bubonic plague. A man brutally spits on his attacker to give him the plague. And then there are rats, etc. (Alley, 1979, p. 134)

This saturation of violence was a direct result of what producer Leonard Freeman conceived of as being good crime television. Writer Art Kean relates the following fictional sequence in an episode to illustrate this point:

“You’re on the 25<sup>th</sup> floor of a high-rise. There’s a woman there with a baby in her arms. This ugly looking guy boots the door. He comes in. He slaps the woman around, picks the baby up, throws it off the lanai and says to the woman, “Now, you bitch, you’re going to die.” That is a 5-0. That’s when Lennie [Freeman] would say, “Wow, we’re going to go with this.” (Stempel, 1992, p. 142)



The series also received criticism for racial stereotyping. Wilson and Gutierrez (1985) point out that the series featured a wide array of both Asian police and criminals and that “at least three Asian actors appeared as regulars on the show” (p. 102). However, as Hamamoto (1994) asserts, the Asian characters “advance the dramatic action by posing rhetorical questions or serving as sounding boards to the principal characters” (p. 18), and those principal characters were White. Further, he contends that the English dialect used by Zulu, who played detective Kono Kalakaua, reduced the character to that of a colonized second-class citizen. Also, Kono and the other Asian detectives were not permitted to take action unless approved by one of their White superiors (p. 18). The program also came under criticism because of its use of Asians in other roles. Liyama and Kitana (1982) point out that the occupations of the Asians were stereotyped, either as police subordinates or as “pimps, assassins and mobsters” and that these portrayals served to “reinforce the familiar pattern that reduces Asians to a few work categories and to a simplified human existence” (p. 158). The authors also maintain that the series modeled the recurring villain Wo Fat (Khieu Dhieng) after the sinister stereotype created by Fu Manchu. “He was a bald-headed, mustached Chinese Communist master spy who sadistically utilized the latest technological and psychological devices to torture as many people as possible for no reason whatsoever” (p. 156). Generally speaking, “the

show's vulnerability to stereotypical criticism was its portrayal of White superiority and leadership in a predominantly Asian environment" (Wilson & Gutierrez, 1985, p. 102). Robards (1985) contends that at the time of its production, this racism toward Hawaii's Asian population "never had to be confronted as overtly as the nation's black and white conflicts" (p. 16).

The portrayal of organized labor in the series was better, but only slightly so. Puette (1991) describes "A Short Walk on the Long Shore" episode in which a Longshoreman's Union leadership struggle provides the backdrop for the story. One union leader who is linked with the mob is killed after he turns the tables on his opponent by charging him with corruption. The remaining union leader, who falls under suspicion of causing the murder, threatens the governor with a dock strike unless McGarrett finds the true killer. McGarrett discovers that the mob ordered the killing because their man was becoming too independent (p. 181). The episode relies on two uncomplimentary stereotypes in depicting organized labor. First, their leadership is influenced by criminal elements, and second, even the good union members are not above threatening action to achieve their personal agenda. This stereotypical portrayal of labor representatives reflects the class notions inherent in the production. Alley (1979) points out that "the series implies a strict caste system in which even McGarrett knows

his place. Governors and other high officials are skillfully woven into plots as persons of the upper class. And everyone follows orders” (p. 136).

*Hawaii Five-0* even came under criticism for its treatment of the disabled. The episode “Hookman” depicts a man who had lost his hands while attempting a robbery and is seeking revenge on McGarrett in what Nelson (1994) refers to as an all too typical treatment of arm amputees. He described these amputees as being cast as “evil vengeful types wanting to get back at society” (p. 21).

Although the Five-0 team demonstrated the same zeal as the protagonists on *Dragnet* and *The Untouchables*, given the attitudes of the late 1960s and early 1970s, they had to present “a cooler image for law enforcement. . . . They had to act ‘cool’ at the same time as they were being good guys” (Rushkoff, 1994, p. 47). This “cooler image” was reflected more in the appearance of the principal character—longer hair and more stylish clothes—and only slightly in his attitude. As Alley (1979) maintains: “McGarrett may be lenient with offenders whom he believes can be reclaimed, but if guilty of stealing [or anything else] the person involved must pay the penalty” (p. 134). In fact, McGarrett, and the series, often presented these two views of criminals, those who were reclaimable and those who were “hard-core” and antisocial. Carlson (1985) refers to *Hawaii Five-0* as a morality play in which the criminals, who lead antisocial lives,

are punished, and those who do not cross into antisocial behavior are rewarded (p. 36). Of course, the acceptance of the values of the social system are also a prerequisite for achieving this reward. The program implies that “the Puritan ethic of hard work and diligence is rewarded with success” (Alley, 1979, p. 136).

One additional observation should be made concerning *Hawaii Five-0*. Women did not play a major role in the series. There were no female detectives; the only female member of the investigative team was McGarrett’s secretary, and her role was generally limited to taking telephone calls and delivering messages. Women were shown as victims of crime and, on occasion as criminals themselves, but under the direction of men. The lack of female agency was reflected even in the private life of McGarrett. “He has never been married. He feels that being married and being a good cop are incompatible pursuits” (Clark, 2000). In the few instances in which McGarrett is shown seeking female companionship, the plot line revolves around his past experiences, before he became the head of Five-0, and demonstrates his “macho,” heterosexual character more than his desire to form a relationship.

During the 12 years that *Hawaii Five-0* aired, the investigative team consistently “booked” the criminal and triumphed over threats to the social order. In this regard the show demonstrated that it was as committed to

maintaining and protecting the society's institutions of authority as were *The Untouchables* and *Dragnet*. Further, the series showed the same attitude toward the criminals' civil rights as its predecessors. "Defendants' rights were observed only grudgingly, particularly when dealing with career criminals" (Lichter et al., 1991, p. 210). It also dealt with social tensions that were surfacing at the time with the same disdain as *Dragnet*. An example of how a social issue could turn into a criminal action was related by Lichter et al., who note that one episode of the series had a plot line that featured a businessman who attempts to kill the state's director of development, not to eliminate any obstacles to feature development, but to protect the state's environment (p. 210).

Although the series could be criticized for its violent content, its racial stereotyping, its insensitivity toward organized labor, the disabled, and women, and for displaying an intolerance for contemporary concerns, *Hawaii Five-0* was still influenced by the period in which it was produced. The series chose to mediate its desire to maintain the social institutions of 1960s America, to promote those agents of authority who protect those institutions and its aversion to those social concerns that threatened them with the perceptions that had surfaced, even among mainstream citizens, that the Vietnam War was bad policy and that a more moderate approach toward its resolution and toward those who questioned it should be advanced. One

episode, “To Kill or Be Killer” (Lawrence, c. 1971), illustrates this mediation and also demonstrates how the ambiguity of the text can promote a variety of negotiated readings.

This episode was written around 1971,<sup>1</sup> and although it appeared after the end of the 1960s, in fact much later, and only in syndication, since CBS refused to air this show during its run on the network,<sup>2</sup> it reflected the tensions within American society during the later 1960s.

Much of the information needed to explain the plot of this episode was conveyed to the viewer in the opening sequence. The viewer becomes aware that someone is using an electronic listening device to gain information about another person. That person is shown falling from a sixth-floor window. The surveillance operator informs a confederate, over the telephone, that something has happened and that he must “pull out.” At this point the traditional introduction is presented. Like a good television detective story, this opening sequence presents the viewer with several questions. Who was the man who fell? Did he fall, or was he pushed? If he fell, was it an accident or suicide? Was he murdered? Who was watching and listening to him? Why?

As the story continues the viewers learns that the person who fell was named Jack Rigney (Peter Jason), a Vietnam veteran and an officer, who had been back from the war for only 2 days. His father (John

Anderson) was an active brigadier general in the army. He had a girlfriend when he left for the war, but during his absence she had married someone else. Now the viewer is presented with another question. Could the emotional trauma caused by the loss of his girlfriend, and the realization of such a loss upon arriving home, be a catalyst for the young man to commit suicide? The viewer now learns that a maid had changed her initial police report. She had claimed that she heard a struggle in Jack's apartment prior to his fall and had seen a man leaving with a gun. Now she informs McGarrett that she was unsure of any of the events she had described. Again, many questions are raised by this interview. Why did she change her mind? Was she forced into changing her story, and, if so, by whom? This last question becomes more relevant when McGarrett's team finds a gun at the exact location that the maid originally had described. These questions not only make for a good suspense show, but also add an element of ambiguity that becomes important as the program progresses and the detectives are confronted with the principal social issue of the time, the legitimacy of the Vietnam War.

McGarrett learns that the gun is a Russian-made revolver used by the Viet Cong and a popular, although illegal, souvenir of the war. The gun also has two sets of fingerprints; one set belongs to Jack and the other is unknown, not in the criminal justice system. It is also learned that Jack's

next door neighbor had not be seen since the tragedy and that Jack has a younger brother, whom Jack's father had failed to reveal to the detectives. McGarrett orders his men to check the driver's license bureau for the gun's second set of fingerprints. As the story progresses, McGarrett discovers the wiring for the surveillance device in the neighbor's apartment and concludes that he worked for a government intelligence agency. He also finds that the second set of fingerprints belong to Jack's brother, Mike (Michael Anderson, Jr.).

As McGarrett is pursuing his investigation, the viewer learns that Mike is soon to be inducted into the army and that he is being watched by the intelligence agent as he arrives at his girlfriend's dorm room. There the viewer also learns that he has just come from visiting with his brother. Mike's girlfriend, Gail Howard (Joy Band), asks him if he has talked to his brother about whether he should refuse induction into the army. Mike is evasive in his answer, but does reveal that his options are limited with respect to his induction. He confirms that he believes that the Vietnam War is immoral, but that not all war is immoral, and therefore he does not qualify as a conscientious objector. He can either go into the army, go to Canada, or go to jail. This feeling was shared by many young men during the 1960s, and it presented a more moderate appraisal of opposition to the war than the idea that national interest could not justify the killing of another human.



Some still believed that confrontations such as the Second World War were justified because America had fought an aggressor nation and/or that its enemies were engaged in genocide. However, for them, the Vietnam War was not justified because now America was an aggressor nation, and some saw their country as also being involved in genocide. Others felt that such an attitude was a simple justification to avoid military service and demonstrated either underlying cowardliness or a lack of patriotism. Such sentiment is expressed by Mike's father, the general, when he was confronted by McGarrett concerning Mike's visit to Jack. The general felt that his younger son has "copped out" on his responsibilities as both a man and an American. The rash, quick-to-judge attitude of the father is a contrast to the pensive nature of Mike's response to the question of national military service. This factor adds to the ambiguity of the presentation. Is Mike attempting to arrive at a well-reasoned, moral decision concerning his personal involvement in Vietnam, or is his reflective attitude a result of personal guilt for being involved with his brother's death? This question is partially answered by Mike's surprise when he learns of his brother's death while looking at a newspaper's headline. Through the newspaper, he also learns that the police are interested in questioning him. This situation alters Mike's options. He had already decided to flee to Canada to avoid his induction;

now he knows that he must opt for a contemporary “underground railroad” to reach his destination.

At this point, the episode reverts to one of its principal themes: “The counterculture activities are still plainly wrong” (Rushkoff, 1994, p. 47). The members of this hippie “underground railroad” act more like gangsters than “love children;” they are obviously more interested in money than any political cause, and their sympathy for draft resisters is superficial at best. This gangster image is reinforced when Detective Danny Williams (James MacArthur) infiltrates the group in order to gain information about Mike. After Williams explains that he is an army deserter and pays the group \$500 to aid in his escape, one of the members recognizes the detective. However, before they can act, Williams and the other inhabitants of the “hippie pad” are taken into custody by “unnamed” federal authorities. Williams is not only rescued from a potentially violent reaction from the hippies, but also from the mainstream fans of the series, as he is handed a marijuana cigarette just prior to the arrest, and his choice as whether to smoke it or not to smoke it is never disclosed.

While Williams is infiltrating the hippies, McGarrett decides to find out why army intelligence was interested in Jack and if they knew anything about his death. He is told that the Pentagon would like him to “cool” his investigation. McGarrett refuses to be pressured by the government. This is

an especially important moment in the construction of an ambivalent plot line—one which would allow for a variety of negotiated readings—for several reasons. First, much of the ideology conveyed in the series is presented through the persona of McGarrett. As Alley (1979) states, “Not only criminals, but other police officers, citizens, politicians appear as subordinate to McGarrett” (p. 135), and by this act of resistance to government pressure, McGarrett reassures the viewer that if the army is involved in a cover-up he will expose it. This resistance is also counterbalanced by McGarrett’s backstory. He is a graduate of the Navel Academy at Annapolis who served as an intelligence agent in the navy. Although he had a reputation as a stubborn and sometimes rebellious officer, he received several field promotions and even earned a Presidential Citation for his work and ultimately reached the rank of commander. In fact, McGarrett had received his job as head of the Five-0 unit based on the recommendation of a naval prosecutor (Clark, 2000). With this background the detective was very likely to sympathize with the military on matters of national security. McGarrett’s backstory and his insistence on gaining all the facts concerning Jack’s death come into conflict as the episode concludes.

McGarrett, now suspecting that the army has information that might be decisive in determining the cause of Jack’s death, convinces the general

to call in as many favors as necessary to gain access to that information.

The intervention by the general results in a meeting among army intelligence, the general and his wife, McGarrett and Williams, and Mike and Gail , when the surveillance tape of Mike's visit to Jack is played.

As the audiotape is played and the image of Jack is superimposed over the machine, the story of Jack's last moments begins to unwind as a series of flashbacks alternates with images of those participating in the meeting. Jack is shown reaching for a gun and loading it. McGarrett and Williams immediately recognize the sound of the clip being loaded into the gun and the gun being cocked. Mike is then shown entering the apartment, where he sees that his brother is about to commit suicide. After he yells at his brother to "stop," a struggle ensues, and Mike takes the gun from Jack. After Mike asks his brother. "Why?," Jack reveals that he was ordered to sweep a Vietnamese village area that was thought to be in the control of the Viet Cong. However, there were no Communists in the village, only older men, women, and children. His army group killed the people anyway. As this information is revealed, the viewer is shown an image of McGarrett who demonstrates obvious distress at hearing this information. Then Mike tries to convince Jack to talk to their father about the incident. Jack rejects this suggestion, telling his brother that he cannot face his father because he thinks of him as a hero and he would not understand the incident. After

agreeing not to inform their father and soliciting an agreement from Jack to seek help, Mike leaves the apartment. The viewer sees the assembled group as they listen to a sliding door open and a woman scream—signifying Jack’s death. Now everyone, including the viewer, knows that Mike did not participate in his brother’s death. The general then approaches his son and tells him “Its all over.” Mike informs him that it is not over and that he will not go into the army. The general responds that Jack was involved in an isolated incident that was uncharacteristic of army operations in Vietnam. Mike indicates that he has already made up his mind and would rather “go to jail” than fight in Vietnam. The general responds that, in that case, both of his sons are dead. After briefly looking downward, McGarrett looks at the father and son with no expression. The episode concludes with the general and his wife leaving the room, symbolically turning right in the hall, then followed by Mike and Gail, just as symbolically turning left.

There is no doubt that, given the show’s subject matter, contemporary concerns revolving around America’s presence in Vietnam found their way into this episode of the series. It is equally clear that a contemporary event, the “My Lai Massacre,” formed the backdrop for its plot. It is probably for this reason that the network refused to air the program. Yet this episode was intended to contribute to the national discourse surrounding this event and the position that the program took was

one that supported the military. The interpretation of My Lai promoted by the military, and endorsed by the general in this episode, was that the massacre was an “isolated incident.” Jack’s confession that he knew that there were no Viet Cong in the village and that he was a false hero and not deserving of his father’s admiration could also be seen as a further support for the government’s position that My Lai was a result of poor decision making on the part of junior-level officers rather than a result of any systematic defect. However, the episode also allows for other interpretations. The sympathetic portrayal of Mike, including his loyalty and concern for his brother, lets the viewer form a sympathetic appraisal of his concerns about military service in Vietnam. The key to negotiating a variety of different readings for this episode of *Hawaii Five-0* lies with the series’ principal character. It is the combination of the position that McGarrett holds in the structure of the series, his backstory, and his ambivalent reaction to the events in “To Kill or be Killed” that allows for these diverse readings. McGarrett validates his position within the structure of the show and with the audience through his defiant refusal to “cool” his investigation and his commitment to uncover the truth. His position thus reaffirmed, it only remains for viewers to interpret McGarrett’s response to the events disclosed during the final encounter in order to form a negotiated reading of the episode and to justify their reading. McGarrett’s responses are

intentionally vague and ambiguous. This ambiguity allows for the construction of what Fiske (1989c) calls a “producerly text,” that allows the television program enough room to support the dominant ideology while still allowing for other meanings to be read by the viewers which have relevance in their everyday lives.

The meanings that this “producerly” text allows are numerous. Does the disgust that McGarrett demonstrates after learning of the massacre come as a realization that America is engaged in a war of genocide, or is it a result of the knowledge that this army officer violated the principles of the military in which he served? Does this reaction reflect the position that the concerns expressed by many anti-war advocates have a certain merit and that this war is producing soldiers who will commit atrocities, or does it reflect the knowledge that the violence of war produces a setting in which horrible “isolated incidents” can occur? The ending sequence in which McGarrett quickly looks down and then emotionlessly looks back at Mike and the general fails to aid in the determination of the answers to the above question. Does his downward glance reflect his conviction the general is correct that this event represents an “isolated incident?” Does it reflect the possibility that Mike is correct in his rationale for avoiding military service? Does it reflect the fact that he is uncomfortable about witnessing a family tragedy? The neutral expression following the downward look offers no answer. The

viewers are left to draw their own conclusion, and those conclusions will reflect their perceptions of the war and their questions concerning the My Lai incident.

It is because of the ambiguousness of both the text and the visual representation of the characters, especially McGarrett, that multiple readings are possible. This episode demonstrates the value of ambiguity in the text, which allows the viewer to form a negotiated reading and also gain pleasure in watching the show.

#### The Subculture Sends a Message: *The Prisoner*

*The Prisoner* also premiered on American television in the turbulent year of 1968. “Regarded by many buffs as the finest dramatic series ever broadcast, *The Prisoner* was certainly one of the most imaginative and enigmatic shows in TV history” (McNeil, 1991, p. 614). The series offered the members of the subculture a text in which the preferred reading paralleled their concerns and attitudes. Further, it also had an impact on the evaluation of the television industry during the 1960s, because, according to Rovin (1977), “if the 1968 television season is remembered for having contributed anything constructive to the medium, it will be for the seventeen-episode run of Patrick McGoochan’s British-made metaphoric and frightening series *The Prisoner*” (p. 120).



As Himmelstein (1984) asserts, “The premise of *The Prisoner* builds from the backstory of *Secret Agent*: [John] Drake comes to question the morality of his work” (p. 178). *Secret Agent* was a British spy thriller which the producer, Lew Grade, hoped would find an audience in the United States (J. S. Miller, 2000, p. 25). It was first introduced as a summer replacement in 1961 under the title of *Danger Man*, with the protagonist depicted as a NATO agent named John Drake (McNeil, 1991, p. 179). Although *Danger Man* was canceled after its summer run, Grade realized that, by the middle of the decade, “Britishness” had become fashionable. This new-found popularity for everything British was the result of several factors. First was the introduction of the British music group The Beatles to American popular culture. This group appealed to the young audience because it delivered a sound that was within the subversive rock ‘n’ roll genre. In addition, their appearance—long hair below their ears and a “mod” wardrobe—promoted a new sense of style among their audience. Not only was the music scene influenced by the Beatles and the subsequent “British invasion” of other performers, but also the entire cultural industry began to adopt the new British style. In addition to this infusion of British cultural artifacts, interest in the fictional British agent James Bond began to increase. Bond achieved cult status when President John F. Kennedy endorsed the writings of Ian Fleming, Bond’s creator, in the early 1960 (J. S. Miller,

2000, p. 25), and icon status was achieved when the fictional character began to appear in the movies.

Recognizing this new trend in American culture, Grade retooled his show, calling it *Secret Agent*, gave Drake a pronounced British accent instead of the Americanized one used in *Danger Man*, switched his employment from NATO to the British government, and even gave the protagonist a British sports car to drive (*Danger Man*, 2000). Both shows starred Patrick McGoohan as agent Drake, and Grade gave McGoohan considerable latitude in developing the character. Rather than the action-oriented, macho character developed by Fleming, Drake would be calm and more introspective. He would use “no guns unless absolutely necessary, problems [would be] solved with brains first and fists second, and certainly no overt sexual dalliances [would be observed]” (*Danger Man*, 2000). This construction of the Drake character would allow the protagonist to question his job’s morality, a necessary component of the future show, *The Prisoner*.

In an interview with Warner Troyer in March 1977, the producer, star, and sometimes writer of *The Prisoner*, Patrick McGoohan, gave the following account of how the program originated:

And I’d made 54 of those [episode of *Secret Agent*] and I thought that was an adequate amount. So I went to the gentleman, Lew Grade, who was the financier, and said that I’d like to cease making

*Secret Agent* and do something else. So he didn't like that idea. . . . I said I was going to quit. So he said, "What's the idea?" . . . I had a whole format prepared of this *Prisoner* thing which initially came to me on one of the locations on *Secret Agent* when we went to this place called Portmeirion, where a great deal of it was shot, and I thought it was an extraordinary place, architecturally and atmosphere wise, and should be used for something and that was two years before the concept came to me. . . . So I talked for ten minutes and he stopped me and said, "I don't understand one word you're talking about, but how much is it going to be?" So I had a budget with me, oddly enough, and I told him how much and he says, "When can you start?" I said Monday, on scripts. And he says, "The money will be in your company's account on Monday morning." Which it was. (Troyer, 1977)<sup>3</sup>

The plot of each episode of *The Prisoner* was driven by the need for information. Under the direction of Number Two, the figurehead leader of the Village sought to gain information from Number Six concerning why he quit the intelligence service. Number Six, on the other hand, wanted to know the identity of members of the Village's elite—as differentiated from the other residents/prisoners of the Village—on whose side of the cold war struggle were the Village's elite, and the identity of Number One, the

behind-the-scenes leader. Both protagonists failed. At the end of each episode, Number Six either remained or, if his initial escape was successful, returned, to the Village, and Number Two was replaced, and “the mysterious Number One was not seen until the final episode” (Rovin, 1977, p. 120).

Upon first view, the series appeared to be an interesting elongation of the typical capture-and-escape sequence of most spy productions, on television and in movies, of the era. However, as W. Miller (1980) asserts, the viewer was soon presented with “a departure from reality” (p. 112). The first evidence of this departure came in an examination of the prisoner’s new surroundings.

The village in which the resigned intelligence officer is held is quaint, charming. People dress as at a resort. Golf carts serve as cars and taxis. There are afternoon band concerts. Almost everyone is pleasant and polite. It would seem like a picturesque English seaside resort—except for the constant threat. There is continual electronic surveillance. . . . [and] one of the primary defenses against escape from the village is a large white “ball” five or six feet in diameter which pursues and engulfs those who try to get away. (p. 113)

This disjunction of stylistic elements was extended throughout the set. Art director, Jack Shampan, stated that many of the images found in the

underground complex beneath the Village, the pointed archways and contrasts between light and dark areas of the set, reflect aspects of German expressionism (Rodley, 1984). These “noir” settings combined with the uncertainty of many aspects of the text to create an atmosphere in which the viewers could begin to question the reality of the information they were receiving, not so much from the series, as from the intelligence establishment of their own country.

The uncertainty of the text can be demonstrated by the decision by the agents of Number Two to use drugs to induce information from Number Six. One on-line commentator reflected that “throughout the series, mood-altering drugs are used on the central character,” and linked this drug use to the subculture, stating that it “reflects on the position of hallucinogenic drugs in 1960’s ‘alternative culture’” (Gregory, 2000). Although this is one negotiated reading, it is more likely that the viewer understood that these drugs were not “mood-altering,” but were rather, mind-altering and would draw parallels to the techniques of “brain-washing” that had come to be associated with Communist intelligence agencies through the controversial movie *The Manchurian Candidate*.<sup>4</sup> However, even in this area the text proves uncertain; as Patrick McGoohan stated, “They [the people administering drugs] could be his own people. They could be his enemies. Perhaps both” (Rovin, 1977, p. 120). This uncertainty equates the two sides

of the cold war struggle with each other, both in terms of goals and the use of any means necessary to achieve those goals. Thus, viewers would be provided with a tool to negotiate a reading that corresponded with concerns about the validity of the information that their government was furnishing them and the ethics of the actions that their government was pursuing to meet its goals. These concerns were commonly expressed within the subculture.

Buxton (1990) asserts that the text of *The Prisoner* spoke to the concerns of the conservative upper-middle class in America, which resented the state's intrusion into their private lives, and the role of the media in creating conformity (p. 82). While one could easily argue that the program does condemn the state's encroachment into the private lives of its citizens and the power of the state and the media to enforce conformity—elements that would form the basis for American middle-class frustration during the 1970s and 1980s—during the 1960s the members of America's middle class were under siege, viewing both the politics and the lifestyles of their children as a rejection of their values. Under these circumstances, and although they were beginning to relate to the frustration expressed in Buxton's analysis, the middle class tended to embrace and identify with the institutions under attack. Thus, support of the government was seen as a patriotic act. However, there is no doubt that the text of *The Prisoner* could

be embraced by both the politically Right and Left margins of American culture. While questioning Buxton's evaluation as being more representative of British rather than American culture as it existed in late 1960s, J. S. Miller (2000) seems to affirm the potential for a preferred reading by both margins of the American audience when he stated that although elements of the program might indeed have appealed to such conservatives—Cold War ideologues and cultural critics of the 1950s—in matters both political and cultural, it also contained elements attractive to their children, who were at least for the moment rejecting the bourgeoisie and establishing new forms of political and cultural radicalism. Indeed both groups are explicitly hailed in the final episode of the series. (p. 48)

The final episode, "Fallout" (McGoohan, 1969a), which J. S. Miller (2000) referenced, contains a sequence in which a young man, Number 48 (Alexis Kanner) appears before a tribunal and is lectured on the pointlessness of his youthful lifestyle and rebellious attitude. The youth responds with what one review termed "an odd mixture of 50s and 60s slang" ("Fallout," 2000), starts singing "Dem Bones," wildly gesturing in time with the music. The youth's trial ends as he is proclaimed guilty of revolt and removed. J. S. Miller equates what he calls this "uncoordinated" youth with the members of the subculture:

The ‘uncoordinated youth’ of America’s New Left followed the social and cultural critique of their 1950s mentors, adding to them the belief in the power of individuals to act together in a participatory democracy to rid society of institutional repression; the radicals of the counterculture believed that repression was obviated through the discovery and cultivation of the individual spirit, frequently through the use of psychedelic drugs. (p. 48)

The youth’s trial is followed by a surreal moment when the dead Number Two (Leo McKern), who died in the preceding episode, “Once Upon a Time (McGoohan, 1969b), in an attempt to convert Number Six (Patrick McGoohan), is brought into the chamber and resurrected. Number Two is ungrateful for this transition and receives a rebuke about “biting the hand that feeds him.” After an argument with the mechanical eye that is viewing the procedure and that represents Number One, Number Two is also removed to suffer the same fate as the youth. Here the program links the two generations together as victims of an intrusive society.

This linkage is short-lived, however. The two rejects, along with Number Two’s butler (Angelo Muscat), escape with Number Six and make their way to London. It is at this point that the linkage breaks down; after entering the outskirts of the city, Number Two decides to go to Parliament, where he will attempt to inform the nation of the existence of the Village



and thus change the system through traditional means. At the same time, Number Forty Eight also departs. He prefers to be alone and hitchhikes in another direction, thus rejecting the system and opting for an alternative one. Along with the butler, Number Six returns to his home. As the butler approaches the front door, it opens by itself, just as it had in the Village. Once again the ambiguity of the text emerges. Does this signal, that no matter what action one takes with regard to altering the system— participation, rejection, or acceptance—the result will remain the same; one will always be a prisoner within it? The last scene of the program shows Number Six “driving on a runway exactly as he was in the opening title sequence” (“Fallout,” 2000). Does this sequence prove that the text embraced the subculture’s desire for escape and that the acceptance of an alternative culture will lead to freedom? Or does this mean that Number Six has merely accepted the system as it exists and chooses pleasure over the illusion of freedom? If so, would Number Two’s approach of working within the system, or would Number Forty Eight’s method of disassociation from the system, yield results? More importantly, with whom could the preferred meaning of this text be more closely associated? Perhaps the introductory sequence rather than the ending episode might clarify this question.

The 2 and a half-minute introduction to each episode of *The Prisoner* features an unknown man driving up to an impressive building, pounding on a desk in anger and resigning, going home only to be gassed into unconsciousness, and awaking in his flat, which seems to have been transported to another location. The introduction concludes with an image of the man's face, superimposed on a long shot of the new location, and a set of jail doors slamming shut over the image of the man's face. However, as J. S. Miller (2000) points out, the introduction "left the viewer with several key questions the introductions usually answer" (p. 43). These questions included: "Who is the man? Why did he resign, and from what? Who is after him? Why do they want him? What happens after he passes out?" (p. 43). Although, as Miller also stated, "As to who he was in the program, that was left entirely up to the viewer, in a deliberate move by McGoohan [the producer, as well as the lead actor in the series] to create as open a text as possible" (p. 43). However, for those viewers who were familiar with McGoohan's former work, *Secret Agent*, the choice was obvious. This was John Drake, the British intelligence agent who had become disillusioned with his work. This opinion was advanced in the first episode of the series "Arrival" (Markstein & Tomblin, 1968), in which,

upon regaining consciousness, "Drake" attempts to use the telephone, only to hear a voice ask: "What is your number?"

“Haven’t got a number,” he says. “No number, no call,” comes the response. He soon discovers that they have given him a number—Number Six—and taken away his name. (p. 43)

The establishment of Number Six, a man with a number and no name, directly links this prisoner to John Drake. The refrain of the title song of *Secret Agent* mentions that “they’ve given you a number and taken away your name.” The “they” implied in the song is the intelligence community, and the fact that, in Drake’s case, that intelligence community is British, an ally of the United States, calls into question the ethics of both governments. In terms of Fiske and Hartley’s (1978) analysis of the function of television “to articulate the main lines of the established cultural consensus about the nature of reality (and therefore the reality of nature)” (p. 88), this would reinforce the subculture’s notion that, for authority to be maintained, the population must be made homogenous, with everyone accepting the dominant ideology, and that any type of nonconformity must be discouraged. The members of the subculture knew that the one consistent message which promoted during their adolescence was that nonconformity was dangerous (Ardman, 1995), and many elements of their new lifestyle were nonconformist in nature. They also embraced the notion that they were just as capable of ascertaining correct values as their parents. This conception would be further reinforced when, at the end of the episode and at the

beginning of each following episode, the prisoner states, “I am not a number! I am a person” (J. S. Miller, 2000, p. 43), and by the prisoner’s assertion that “I will not be pushed, filed, shaped, indexed, briefed, debriefed or numbered! My life is my own!” (p. 44).

Berger (1981) uses the “Arrival” (Markstein & Tomblin, 1968) episode of *The Prisoner* to illustrate the concept of paradigmatic analysis,<sup>5</sup> a semiotic strategy used in evaluating meaning in television programs. His construction of polar opposites within the episode serves to establish some elements of identity between the program and the youth subculture.

Table 2

Polar Oppositions in “Arrival” Episode of *The Prisoner*

<u>Freedom</u>	<u>Control</u>
Number Six	Number Two
The individual	The organization
Trust	Deception
Willpower	Force
<u>Escape</u>	<u>Entrapment</u>

Note: From Berger, 1981, p. 105.

Simply by viewing the opening sequence of *The Prisoner*, any member of the television audience would instantly know that the protagonist was Number Six (Patrick McGoochan), and they remembered him as the star

of the *Secret Agent* series. He is clearly the prisoner. He is also clearly a hero, “endlessly resourceful and imaginative,” quick with his “fists as well as his brain” (Gregory, 2000). He assumes more agency than most prisoners and places himself in a position of equality with those who are guarding him. He is also consistent, never compromising his principles nor his conviction to refuse to conform to the social demands of his new environment. Throughout the series “he remains an ‘Everyman’ figure symbolizing the eternal struggle of the individual against society” (Gregory, 2000). The “Everyman” figure that Gregory described was especially relevant to the members of the subculture, for at that time, they considered themselves to be a small group of individuals opposing the conventions of society. As Ardman (1995) asserts, for the members of the subculture, “the 1960s were about breaking all the rules.” These rules included fitting in with one’s social group and obeying authority. The members of the subculture could identify with Number Six because he refused to conform and because he resisted authority, not only by resigning from an institution that maintained the authority of the state, but also through his attitude toward Number Two.

Number Two is the manager of the Village, responsible for its day-to-day operations, which included retrieving information from Number Six. His tactics varied from episode to episode and formed their plot line. He

acted as the counterpoint to Number Six. In Number Two, the members of the subculture had an easy reference for the authority figures whom they had encountered in their everyday life. Yet Number Two was not the enemy. He, like their parents, their college administrators, or the members of their draft boards, while promoting and maintaining the status quo, was just as trapped in the system. As Himmelstein (1984) contends, Number Two serves to prove C. Wright Mills's thesis in his book *The Power Elite* that those who really held power are invisible and use their managers, professional politicians, and celebrities as fronts, while they run the operation from the background. Number Two also represents the facelessness of power and the interchangeability of managers, because he is played by a different actor in each episode (p. 178).

Number Two, the Village's main authority figure, is clearly not the person in charge of the organization that maintained the Village. There is the mysterious Number One, who is a member of "the Power Elite" who represents the invisibility of the corporate ruling culture. Who is Number One? In the concluding episode, the viewer learned that Number One "was a raving lunatic in an ape's mask" (Rovin, 1977, p. 120) who looked exactly like Number Six. "Number One is revealed as the prisoner's alter ego, the side of the repressive authoritarian" (Himmelstein, 1984, p. 178). The authoritarian members of the Power Elite "are not made by their jobs; they

set up and break down jobs for thousands of others; they are not confined by simple family responsibilities; they can escape” (Mills, 1956, p. 3).

If Number One can escape from the constraints imposed by society, certainly it is a worthy goal for every individual; at least that was the opinion of Number Six and many members of the subculture. In *The Prisoner*, society is represented by the Village, and within that society all the members “are known only by numbers, and all traces of their individuality are submerged” (Gregory, 2000). In an interview, McGoohan described the Village as “a place that is trying to destroy the individual by every means possible” (Troyer, 1972). The goal of creating a society in which the individual is a nonentity, secondary to the needs of society, is demonstrated clearly in “Checkmate” (Kelsey, 1968). In this episode Number Six is invited to join a game of human chess and is asked to be the “Queen’s pawn.” The symbolism is unmistakable; all the members of the Village are pawns in the work of their masters. The “conventional wisdom” of 1960s American ideology called for the viewer to associate the Village with the authoritarian regimes within the Communist bloc; however, the program calls this assumption into question by making Number Six the “Queen’s pawn.” This could be taken as a reference to his former service in the British intelligence establishment and further reflects back on one of the primary questions that the series poses: Which side in the cold war struggle

controls the Village? The reference to the “Queen’s pawn” also links the Village to the American intelligence community because of the close ties between Britain and the United States.

The theme of reducing the individual’s sustainability and molding him into a subservient member of Village society is continued when the “Rook” (Ronald Radd) suddenly breaks away from the predictable pattern of the game and makes a move on his own, resulting in a check of the enemy King. At that point, the “Rook” is removed from the board, with the “Queen” (Rosalie Crutchley) justifying the action, commenting that he was a practitioner of the “cult of the individual.” After the game, the metaphor of the chess match is continued, and the theme of the subservient citizen is expanded. At this juncture of the episode, Number Six approaches the “man with the stick,” Number Fourteen (George Coulouris) and engages him in conversation. The importance of the chess board/pawn analogy is reinforced in the closing credits in which the actors are identified as the “Man with the stick,” the “Rook,” and the “Queen,” instead of by a number. Number Fourteen claims that he can separate “black and white,” and “can distinguish between prisoners and warders [those members of the Village who serve Number Two] by their attitude of either subservience or arrogance. Inmates would do as they were told, warders would not” (“Checkmate,” 2000). It clear what those who control the Village envision for their citizens; as



McGoohan described it, “The majority of them have been sort of brainwashed. Their souls have been brainwashed out of them. Watching too many commercials is what happened to them” (Troyer, 1977).

Although this last remark by the producer of the series might have been intended in a humorous way, it still speaks to the type of society that the Village represents. J. S. Miller (2000) describes *The Prisoner* as being open-ended in its depiction of consumerized postindustrial society: only the instruments of surveillance and death in Number Six’s premodern prison village speak of technological advancement, and the “escape” for which he struggles propels him back into the world of Lotus sports cars, Carnaby Street fashion, and the commodified geography of travel brochures. (p. 49)

The fact that Number Six found himself in a postmodern, or consumerized postindustrial, environment is echoed by Himmelstein (1984), who claims that when the prisoner resigned from the intelligence service, he set in motion forces that led “him into the uncharted hell of technology and the repression of the corporate state” (p. 178). This projection of a new enemy, the corporate state, was a shift from the traditional East-West confrontations depicted on television during the cold war era. Power was seen to be held by those who controlled technology, and it did not matter whether they were Communist governments who controlled their production

entities or capitalist corporations who controlled their governments. This is why the series never identified who was responsible for the prisoner's incarceration. It did not matter; what was important was who controlled technology.

The linkage between technology, the society of the Village, and the subjugation of the individual was demonstrated in numerous episodes. In "Fallout" (McGoohan, 1969a), the trial room described above has one wall entire wall containing technical equipment and is dominated by a mechanical "eye," like the one used to scrutinize the Villagers, with a large Number One on it. It is clear that this judicial proceeding is to be controlled by the same "power elite" that controls every other aspect of Village society. There is a further linkage between the "power elite" and power of the state when the viewer is shown military police stationed around the room.

In many episodes the use of technology as a tool of control is presented in a more subtle, but still direct, manner. In "The General" (Adam, 1968), the population of the Village is introduced to a new method of learning called "Speedlearn." This process "imprints information directly into the listener's cerebral cortex. The information, which could of course be anything the Village chooses, is compressed and sent subliminally and the recipient has no control over it" ("The General," 2000). This process is operated through the use of a computer, still a novelty in the late 1960s.

Fear of potential misuse of this new technology is a common theme of many science fiction works and this fear was shared by many members of the subculture, who advocated a return to a more simplified, pastoral version of human organization. The hippies would applaud the ending of this episode, when Number Six attempts to convince Number Two (Colin Gordon) to let him ask the computer a question that it cannot answer. Rising to the challenge, Number Two allows Number Six to write his question. It is fed into the “General,” the name of the computer, and it explodes. Number Six reveals that the question was “insoluble, for man or machine . . . W-H-Y Question Mark: Why?” (Adam, 1968).

The fear of the potential misuse of technology was also shared by the more politically active members of the subculture, who could identify with producer McGoohan’s statement that: “they’re making bigger and better bombs, faster planes, and all this stuff . . . [and]there’s never been a weapon created yet on the face of the Earth that [hasn’t] been used” (Troyer, 1977).

The mechanisms that the Village uses to exercise control not only reinforce the “Willpower/Force” dichotomy; they also serve to question several aspects of contemporary American culture during the 1960s.

The potential use of computers is not only questioned in “The General” (Adam, 1968)—according to McGoohan, “computers have everything worked out for us; we’re constantly being numeralized” (Rovin,

1977, p. 120)—but also in the American higher educational system. The area of social criticism is set into motion when “the village loudspeakers announce the beginning of the Professor’s lecture on history” (“The General,” 2000), and almost en masse, the members of the village leave to attend the lecture, or rather go to their television sets to see the “Speedlearn” presentation. Almost all students during the 1960s would immediately see the parallels between the action on the screen and the criticism leveled by the early “Free Speech Movement” concerning the “herd” mentality,” “lowest common denominator,” “conveyor belt,” approach to education that the university system offered students. Further, for a generation who would agree with Number Two’s statement in “Arrival” (Markstein and Tomblin) that “the information in your head is priceless. I don’t think you realize what a valuable property you’ve become” (J. S. Miller, 2000, p. 44), the concept that the student had no control over the content, or validity, of the information that was passed on through “Speedlearn,” would reaffirm their notion that the educational system was becoming irrelevant.

“A Change of Mind” (Parkes, 1969) questions the techniques of behavior modification psychology popularized by B. F. Skinner and which were becoming fashionable at the time. In this episode, Number Six is compelled to appear before the “committee” to explain his conduct and his refusal to conform to Village standards. There he witnesses Number Forty

Two (Kathleen Breck) confess to being “unmutual,” a Village term used to describe those who refuse to conform. Number Six refuses to take the “committee” or their purpose seriously. As he returns home, he finds that the community newspaper, the *Tally Ho*, has already reported his actions before the “committee” and is announcing their decision to continue to appraise his actions. At home, Number Two (John Sharp) “strongly encourages him to socialize to avoid further trouble” (“A Change of Mind,” 2000). Later he attends a group therapy meeting where Number Forty Two is being “rehabilitated.” After speaking in her defense, Number Six is called a “rebel,” a “reactionary,” and “disharmonious,” and the council declares him “unmutual” and subjected to “instant social conversion.” He is rejected by the rest of the Village, and his telephone is disconnected. The hippies of the subculture could easily identify with the community rejection suffered by Number Six; they experienced similar rejection on an everyday basis. Further, to confirm their notion that the “establishment,” any “establishment,” was the enemy, the series links East and West as the enemy of Number Six. The American psychologist Skinner argued that one’s behavior could be modified, resulting in a more socially adaptable person through a series of both positive and negative rewards. In his experiments with animals he presented food as a positive reward and introduced electrical shock as the negative reward. In this episode, Number Six’s

“unmutal” behavior needs to be modified, and the negative reward is his rejection from the Village. Also, the use of the “committee” and the terms used to describe Number Six’s actions connote Communist China’s “cultural revolution,” which was also occurring during this time. Thus, by linking two contemporary cultural trends, Western behavioral psychology and the Eastern “cultural revolution,” the series demonstrated that, although they may differ in degrees, the techniques used for the maintenance of their authority were the same in both political regimes.

When the behavioral approach fails to work on Number Six, he is dragged to the hospital for more conventional “conversion,” a pre-frontal lobotomy. This operation is shown on the Village television—another illustration of the consumer society of the 1960s.

Although the treatment of Number Six was severe, the members of the subculture could take pleasure in the ending of the episode. After his “social conversion”—he really did not have the operation, but was under the influence of the drugs—he agrees to divulge why he resigned. Turning the table on Number Two, he yells that “Number Two is unmutual,” and because of their conditioning, the villagers pickup the chant and turn on their leader.

According to series producer Patrick McGoohan, ““We’re being imprisoned and engulfed by a scientific and materialistic world”” (Rovin,

1977, p. 120). This attitude was shared by many members of the subculture, who also saw society as a prison. The series offered an escape in the final episode, when Number Six returns home only to find that his door opens automatically, just as in the Village. Himmelstein (1984) appraises his situation:

He is free from totalitarianism and the corporate state, yet not free from his own nature. Nothing has changed, and although he now “understands” his condition, he seems incapable of any action other than personal escape, the only solution to his alienation. (p. 178)

Like Number Six, many hippies perceived that the only way to escape the alienation they felt toward a society dominated by “totalitarianism and the corporate state” was to ENTER into a personal journey of self-awareness. For some this journey entailed a complete rejection of the values of American society and a return to nature; for others, the rejection of American values was not as complete, but it still required that they embrace an alternate lifestyle. Some hippies chose an alternate religion as a means of escape. A few chose violence as an expression of their alienation. Almost everyone chose drugs. Further, almost every member of the subculture, as diverse as it really was, could identify with Number Six and the need to escape from the alienation caused by living in a repressive Village.

Throughout this section, I have argued that the preferred reading of the text of *The Prisoner* corresponds to the ideals of the youth subculture of the 1960s. However, the text of *The Prisoner* is intentionally ambiguous. As noted, Buxton (1990) asserts that *The Prisoner* reflected a concern for the power of the state and its ability to intrude into people's private lives that was predominately a reaction of conservative, upper- middle-class America. One can easily make an argument that such a negotiated reading is plausible, in fact, to the point. However, as has been pointed out, these concerns of the middle class would surface more directly in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, yet this does not mean that a wide variety of readings cannot be constructed from the text. It must be acknowledged that all texts contain ambiguity and that this ambiguity will result in a variety of negotiated readings. Further, in the case of *The Prisoner*, it can be argued that, because of the presence of this ambiguity, especially in terms of never defining exactly who the enemy was, that the preferred reading of this text offered an alternative view to that being expressed in other entertainment programs. Although it foregrounded itself within the discourse of the cold war, it did not embrace its ideology, because it never identified the "other." It also positioned itself within the espionage subgenre, allowing itself to adopt certain of its conventions while questioning their meaning. The presentation of new technology had become a staple within the genre and a point of



ideological pride, with the hero either possessing superior technology or having the ability to circumvent the villain's technology. *The Prisoner* questioned all technology. Even the traditional capture and escape sequence was inverted. Escape was found to be impossible in many episodes, and in the final episode, it resulted in a return to a society that differed from the Village only in style and not in substance.

### Conclusion

Did concerns expressed by the subculture about the direction of American society, and especially the Vietnam War, find their way into the texts of television programs in the late 1960s? Yes. This is not surprising, because the subculture's challenge to many traditional American values was an accepted fact of everyday life, and although the subculture still resided on the periphery of American society, on the issue of America's involvement in the war, the mainstream was growing increasingly closer to the subculture. Further, it should be acknowledged that the television industry was aware of the potential economic value of the youth audience, and the desire to be topical and relevant to this viewing audience was a force in the creation of television programming. Also, the writers, producers, and actors of these shows were just as aware of contemporary tensions as anyone else in 1960s America. The incorporation of social concerns was nothing new in television. Cold war tensions were reflected in *The Untouchables* and in

some episodes of *77 Sunset Strip* during the early 1960s. Race relations formed the subtext of *I Spy* in the mid-1960s. What might be said to be usual during the later 1960s was the extent to which alternative messages found their way into crime dramas. Even the conservative series *Hawaii Five-0* entered into the debate over the Vietnam War and, surprisingly, allowed a nontraditional anti-war sentiment to be expressed. This expression represents the beginning of a the recuperative process that could bring many viewers back to the central position that Fiske and Hartley (1978) refer to when they are comparing television to the bard. As they state: “The bardic mediator constantly strives to claw back into a central focus the subject of its message” (p.87), and the subject of the message was the youth of the subculture. However, the suggestion that some anti-war youths should be approached with sympathy caused CBS to refuse to broadcast the episode.

At the same time, and on the same network, *The Prisoner*, produced a text corresponding to many of the attitudes and ideals of the youth subculture. Both programs used ambiguity in their texts, not only to allow the viewers to form their own reading and gain pleasure from that reading, but as a tool to address contemporary social problems.. In the episode “Kill or Be Killed” of *Hawaii Five-0*, the text presents a thoughtful young man in doubt about the war and a tough cop who is only interested only in the truth.

The refusal to honor the military's request to stop his investigation was difficult for McGarrett, because he was a former commander in the navy. The text of the program also includes a visual element; McGarrett's visual response to the My Lai type event. This, along with the decision by the youth to avoid military service, is intentionally vague and ambiguous. Because of this ambiguity in both the content and the show's visual representation, multiple readings can be produced. It is through these multiple negotiated readings that the viewer gains pleasure from the program.

Like the text of *Hawaii Five-0's* "To Kill or be Killed," the text of *The Prisoner* is intentionally ambiguous, never defining the enemy or ideology behind that enemy, at least in terms of the cold war. Through this ideological ambiguity and the inversion of certain conventions associated with its genre, the program was able to question much of the conventional wisdom of the time and present an alternative view. The program questioned the role of many modern institutions as vehicles to promote the dominant ideology of society. It also questioned the role of the media as a mechanism to control the attitudes and ultimate actions of the members of society. It also suggested that technology, and the "sacred cow" of progress, could be used just as easily to control people as to benefit them. In fact, the

series, like the many members of the subculture, questioned the value of modern society.

## CHAPTER 7

### THERE'S A MAN WITH A GUN OVER THERE: CONCLUSION

This is the end  
Beautiful friend  
This is the end  
My only friend, the end  
Of our elaborate plans, the end  
—Jim Morrison, “The End”

The 1960s began with much promise, especially for America's youth, many of whom would later become members of the youth subculture. The decade started with a youthful, progressive Democrat, John F. Kennedy, assuming the presidency, and his inauguration seemed to signal the start of a new era.

He called upon Americans to “ask not what your country can do for you, ask rather what you can do for your country.” Robert Frost read an inaugural poem, and it seemed to many listeners on that bitterly cold, bright January day that America was entering a decade of intellectual, political, and economic progress. We were going to the moon. We were going to end poverty. The arts would flourish.  
(Morrison & Morrison, 1987, p. xviii)

The press described this euphoric period as “Camelot” and noted that this new administration was attracting many of the nation’s “best and brightest” into government. For many young people this optimism could be extended into other areas of American life. If the concerns of some young people were not being recognized, at least their economic power was recognized. This represents a major current that run throughout this study, namely, that television advertisers wanted to reach this market segment. Television producers were therefore expected to develop programs to attract the youth market while still maintaining popularity with their older audience members, and this was became an increasingly difficult objective during the 1960s. Not only were youth styles changing, but more importantly, many youths were questioning the core values of America’s dominant ideology, and in the process, they were beginning to question many of the social institutions that promoted those values. This presented a dilemma for television producers, because they needed to devise shows that appealed to a discontented youth audience; however, the programs could not embrace the social objectives of this group for fear that the mainstream adult audience would be offended and would not only reject the programs but also the products that they advertised. After all, the youth market might have become a primary avenue to reach disposable income, but it was still their parents’ income that they were disposing. It should also be noted that, especially in the early 1960s,

many producers did not share the mistrust expressed by some youths concerning America's values and institutions, and they were not inclined to include these concerns in the texts of their programs. This desire, as well as financial necessity, to present a text that was basically supportive of American values and institutions has been another focal point of this work. In pursuing this objective, this study has examined television's crime show genre during the 1960s, because of the investment of its principal characters in the maintenance and protection of society. It has also been a concern of this work to examine the strategies developed by the programs within this genre to draw a youth audience and at the same time support the dominant ideology of American society. The study has also examined how the messages of these shows were received by members of the youth subculture. In the chapter 1 several questions concerning the genre, its conveyance of authority, and its reception were posed. The present chapter reviews the conclusions reached in the study with particular attention to addressing those questions.

At the beginning of the 1960s, the desire of advertisers to attract a younger audience dominated the programming strategy of ABC, the third-place network, and in order to save production costs it decided to reach out to Hollywood for programs that could reach the youth market. Two Hollywood outlets that ABC approached to produce its crime show dramas

were Warner Brothers and Desilu. Warner Brothers relied on its experience as a major Hollywood studio, integrating its television production into that system, and Desilu, an independent, used the cost-cutting measures it had devised during its production of *I Love Lucy* to develop a successful production model.

Desilu produced a ratings success for ABC with a Prohibition-era crime show called *The Untouchables*. The series featured action and morality, contrasting the forces of good—a group of incorruptible federal agents—against the forces of evil represented by an endless assortment of mobsters.

*The Untouchables* was examined to determine “the established cultural consensus” during the early 1960s, and how the viewer was led to feel a “sense of cultural membership” (Fiske & Hartley, 1978, p. 88). The series demonstrated that there was an established consensus based on the fear of Communism as a challenge to American society. The series linked this cold war concern to its portrayal of the moral imperative of the Untouchables to rid America of any evil and corrupt mobster influence. The series promoted American values through its characterization of the Untouchables, who not only protected the public, but also detested its enemies. The agents were contrasted with the gangsters, who represented violence and cohesion. The viewers knew that the Untouchables were



protecting a commonly shared value system and could take comfort in this knowledge. Throughout the 1960s, cold war concerns would continue to find a subtle space within the text of the crime show drama, although as the decade progressed these concerns would shift from the Soviet threat to an Asian one, in response to the Vietnam War.

*77 Sunset Strip* was examined because it was an early attempt to attract a youth market; located in a glamorous setting, it provided both action and humor and was populated by handsome detectives, attractive women, and an extremely cool parking attendant. The series also addressed a new subculture in America, playboys, which represented a minor challenge to the dominate ideology's notion of marriage and family and whose attitudes could be seen as influencing certain aspects of the youth subculture of the later 1960s. On the surface, *77 Sunset Strip* presented a group of detectives who, being both swingers and intellectuals, could offer an alternative to the traditional notions of marriage and coupling; however, it presented a sanitized version of the playboy who, basically, supported the traditional views of both marriage and fidelity. The series serves as an example of a television trend that would continue throughout the 1960s. When the medium was forced to confront new lifestyle changes associated with the youth subculture, it promoted visual signs associated with the subculture and reinforced the dominate ideology through the actions and

attitudes of the characters who adopted those visual signs. In the case of 77 *Sunset Strip*, this purpose was achieved through the depiction of the detectives. They were presented as playboys, positioned well within the parameters of American society, and they were also associated with institutions of American authority, both being former members of the U. S. intelligence service, the Office of Strategic Services (the predecessor of the CIA), and the FBI. These associations helped to legitimize the role of these agencies. In addition, the attitudes expressed by the detective heroes stressed the maintenance of traditional, White, male, middle-class values.

Chapter 3 examined two programs , *Batman* and *Dragnet*, that aired in the mid-1960s, and dealt with the second and third questions posed in chapter 1: Can the format used in the production of crime shows be disassembled in order to provide a new meaning? What is the effect of alternative reading devices on the preferred meaning of the text? Both of the programs examined were produced as a response to American youth, and, in both, elements of camp would influence their reception by that group. The producers of *Batman* had hoped to use deliberate camp to gain access to and acceptance from the youth audience. Although the messages presented in the series were basically in support of society's institutions of authority, the producers gambled that the stylistic elements afforded them through the use of deliberate camp would draw and keep a youth audience. On the other

hand, the producer of *Dragnet*, Jack Webb, did not care whether or not his series appealed to youth; in fact, many of the themes presented in the program were in response to what he perceived as excesses on the part of young people. However, much of the youth audience that the show attracted used camp as a tool to negotiate the reading of the series and produce results that were in opposition to Webb's intended messages. By this period in the 1960s, many young people had begun to associate themselves with what Hebdige (1981) called a spectacular subculture. The members of this subculture demonstrated their discontent with the traditional culture "on the level of appearances: that is, at the level of signs" (p.17), and this subculture was in the process of developing its own style in support of these signs. The importance of the process was described by Hebdige when he observed that "style in subculture is, then, pregnant with significance. Its transformations go 'against nature.' . . .as such, they are gestures, movements toward a speech which offends the 'silent majority'"(p.18). The use of camp to attract a youth audience seemed appropriate for the producers of *Batman*, because as Sontag (1966) claims, for camp, "style is everything" (p. 288). The series emphasized style and camp, including comic book visuals, comic book heroes, repetitive sight gags, eccentric costumes, and eccentric villains. Although its message promoted many of the same values that the subculture rejected, the use of deliberate camp, resulting in outlandish visuals and the

absurdly serious nature of the heroes, allowed the members of the subculture to reject these messages as being part of the act. The initial popularity of the series was due to its use of deliberate camp, and it did attract a young audience. The problem with the series was also its use of deliberate camp. Sontag claims that “to camp is a mode of seduction—one which employs flamboyant mannerisms susceptible to a double interpretation, gestures full of duplicity, with a witty meaning for cognoscenti and another, more impersonal, for outsiders” (p. 281). She also makes a distinction between naïve camp, camp which is “unintentional” and “dead serious” (p. 282), and deliberate camp, noting that deliberate camp “is usually less satisfying” (p. 282). Deliberate camp is not less satisfying because it is deliberate; after all it contains flamboyant mannerisms and is full of duplicity, exhibiting double meanings. It is less satisfying because in essence it is a “one-trick pony.” Once the flamboyant mannerisms are appreciated and the double meaning understood, any subsequent version loses effect. The viewer does not become an outsider, but approaches this form in a more impersonal manner. Deliberate camp could seduce the youth audience into watching *Batman*, but it could not sustain their interest, and viewer appeal began to dwindle.

*Dragnet*, on the other hand, is an example of naïve camp, at least as it is currently positioned and as it was probably viewed by many in the 1960s subculture. Hall (1980) provides an explanation of how meaning was

produced by the viewers, which forms the starting point in the effort to understand how camp became a mechanism for an alternative reading of *Dragnet*. He asserted that society's dominant ideology is presented in the texts of television programs. These messages form the preferred meaning for the text, and some viewers identify with those messages. Others do not, and they construct an oppositional reading. However, the majority of viewers negotiate a reading that accepts some aspects of the dominant ideology, but they tailor the messages in the text to reflect their specific circumstances.

In 1960s crime shows, the dominant ideology stressed the necessity for authority and showed police and detectives as agents who "serve" the people and "protect" their society, and for *Dragnet*, this was especially true. At the same time, many members of the subculture were also concerned with authority and felt that the agents of authority, the military and police, were engaged in repression. Thus, most members of the subculture would be in opposition to the preferred reading of *Dragnet*. However, this process could be modified by the use of camp to construct a meaning, still in opposition to the preferred reading, yet offering the audience pleasure in viewing the series. Camp's reliance on promoting a double interpretation of both signs and actions provided just the tool necessary for establishing such an oppositional reading. Webb wanted both his characters and the problems

that they encountered to be taken seriously. However, as Sontag (1966) points out, “The whole point of Camp is to dethrone the serious” (p.288), and through its use the viewer could deconstruct the threats to American society that Webb presented. For members of the subculture this deconstruction allowed for the rejection of both society’s authority and Webb’s view that its agents needed to be glorified.

The conclusion to chapter 4—which examined *I Spy* and *The Avengers*—dealt extensively with the question of whether the genre “hasten[ed] or delay[ed]” social change through its portrayal of images presented to the viewer during the 1960s. The phrase, “hasten or delay,” was drawn from the observation by Fiske (1987) that television was not “an originator of social change,” although once society demanded social change, television could “either hasten or delay it” (p. 45). The evaluation concluded that any analysis of whether a particular program hastened or delayed social change would be subjective and would depend on how social change was defined. Instead of a summary of the conclusion of chapter 4, this section is devoted to using the evaluation of *I Spy* and *The Avengers* to answer the following questions: What social attitudes were reinforced in crime programs in the 1960s? How did these representations provide pleasure to the American television viewer?

*I Spy* clearly reinforced liberal attitudes concerning race and integration. It presented an educated, middle-class Black man who was capable friendship with a White man and who loved and served his country. The series also made a positive contribution in dismantling many of the negative stereotypes of Blacks that had previously appeared on television. However, the series also assumed that the attitudes and values expressed by the Black agent (Bill Cosby as Alexander Scott) were also the attitudes and values held by the majority of the Black community; in other words, the series assumed that Black society shared the same goals as the mainstream White society. This assumption was challenged at the time by many Blacks, who called for a redefinition of Black identity that stressed Black culture and pride.

*I Spy* could provide pleasure to the majority of the White audience because it reaffirmed the notion that progress was being made on racial issues. The show depicted a relationship between two men of different races, which affirmed their hope that racial tensions would dissipate through familiarity. The fact that a Black man was starring in a prime time series further demonstrated that progress was being made on racial matters and progress would continue, even without dramatic intervention. Even during these times of racial tensions, Blacks could find pleasure in the program because it confirmed their hope that their children could also achieve the

“American Dream” through education and hard work. Even for the majority of Blacks who doubted the pace of integration and/or questioned White middle-class values, pleasure could be found in the portrayal of a Black man who appeared to be equal to, and in some ways superior to, a White man.

In the case of *The Avengers*, both of these questions apply. The producers of the series had no desire to challenge traditional notions concerning gender roles; they wanted only to create a new image for their female lead in order to differentiate her role from that of females on other crime programs. They hoped that the handsome and urbane John Steed character would appeal to female viewers, while the character of Emma Peel would attract male viewers. They even objectified the role of Em (male) a (Peel) by casting the attractive Diana Rigg in the role and dressing her in leather, harem attire, black lingerie with a spiked collar, and a see-through white mess outfit. But a strange thing happened; Mrs. Peel’s character resonated among a female audience eager to establish a new identity, and she became a role model for those seeking this new identity. She was the intellectual equal of her male partner and did not need him for protection. She could escape threats both physically and through use of cunning. The series is a rare example of how a television program can contributed future expectations. In many ways the series supported traditional notions of gender roles, Mrs. Peel usually deferred to Steed’s judgments, and there was



a double standard in terms of sexual attitudes. While Steed was allowed, even expected, to chase women, Mrs. Peel could only flirt and was required to remain chaste. Yet the series opened up the possibility for new gender roles and relationships in the future.

By the late 1960s, the initial optimism felt by many young people at the beginning of the decade had begun to fade as the promise of “Camelot” was replaced by the reality of Vietnam, the Peace Corps was again replaced by the cold war, and the glamour of nonviolent civil demonstrations was replaced by traumatic confrontations with the police, which in some cases bordered on repression. Many of these young people responded by entering into a subculture complete with its own signs and ideology (or more accurately, ideologies). These times were equally as disturbing for their parents, as they saw their children reject their lifestyle and many of their values. The America of the late 1960s was completely different from that of the early 1960s. This change was reflected in the following discussion of one of the television programs (*The Prisoner*) that appeared in the late 1960s.

The show addressed a time and a people for whom the dreams of a Camelot had passed, as domestic racial violence and the bloodshed of the Vietnam conflict had superseded whatever utopian sense of

beauty, adventure, and glory might have been represented by the Kennedys. (J. S. Miller, 2000, p. 49)

The remainder of this chapter presents a discussion of three crime programs which appeared in the later 1960s, *The Mod Squad*, *Hawaii Five-0*, and *The Prisoner*, focusing on the question: How did the genre respond to changing social and cultural pressures in the 1960s?

*The Mod Squad* is a classic example of the “all style and no substance” argument, at least as it relates to the 1960s youth subculture. Like the producers of *77 Sunset Strip*, those of *The Mod Squad* hoped to attract a youth audience. Also, like the prior production, it confronted a subculture by promoting the visual signs associated with it while reinforcing the dominant ideology. The program featured a racially mixed trio of amateur sleuths who dressed and acted like hippies, except that they worked for an organization dedicated to the protection and maintenance of those values which the hippies rejected—the police department. Further, although the detectives resembled hippies, they existed in (and the text supported) a world that was dominated by a White male, with both the White female and the Black male assuming secondary positions.

Towards the end of the 1960s, attitudes concerning America’s involvement in the Vietnam War were shifting. The mainstream was also beginning to have doubts about the war, and it is not surprising that these

concerns were reflected in some of the texts of television programs during that period. In order to ensure viewer identification, the necessity of providing relevant programming has always been a driving force within the industry. Further, the people making television programs were just as aware as everyone else in America of concerns centering on the war, and it was only natural that some expression of these concerns found their way into their programs. This was scarcely new for television; contemporary concerns found their way into the text of programs from the medium's inception. However, in the late 1960s concerns reflecting alternative views of the dominant ideology also found their way into crime dramas. In one episode of *Hawaii Five-0*, a series that generally supported the dominant ideology, a topical event, the "My Lai Massacre," was addressed, and questions concerning America's involvement in the war were allowed to enter the text. In another CBS series, *The Prisoner*, the text even supported many of the attitudes and ideals associated with the subculture.

Both of these programs used ambiguity as a tool, allowing alternative messages to enter their text. Although the "To Kill or be Killed" (Lawrence, c. 1971) episode of *Hawaii Five-0* presents a thoughtful young man with doubts about the war, the text also supports the military's explanation for My Lai. The program also uses its primary character, Steve McGarrett, and his backstory, to create the ambivalence necessary for the viewers to form a

variety of negotiated readings. His response to many of the events in the episode are intentionally vague and ambiguous, allowing for multiple readings of the protagonist's feelings and thus neither supporting nor condemning the dominant ideology, nor for that matter, an alternative message.

Like the episode of *Hawaii Five-O*, the text of *The Prisoner* is intentionally ambiguous, never defining either the prisoner's enemy or his ideology. It is this ambiguity that allowed the messages put forward in the program to be aired on network television, a fate that escaped the episode of *Hawaii Five-O* noted above. *The Prisoner* condemned the role of many modern institutions, such as the education system, and the science of psychology, as tools designed to promote the dominant ideology. It questioned the notion of progress as an inevitable and continuous process and pointed out that technology, the result of progress, could be used to control people as well as benefit them. In fact, the series condemned modern society. And in its condemnation of modernity, it expressed questions about capitalism, consumerism, and the proper role of the state, the same questions that formed the bedrock of the ideologies associated with the subculture.

Did the crime show, police/detective genre engage the social concerns of the 1960s? Yes, and with the sole exception of *The Prisoner*, it

produced texts that supported the dominant ideology of the time, and when it did embrace certain aspects of the subculture, it was on a superficial level, addressing only concerns of style. However, during the 1960s, the challenges to the dominant ideology were far from being superficial, and as Stern and Stern (1990) point out, by the end of the 1960s, there was also a reactionary trend, in many cases outside the mainstream, which intensely reacted to those challenges. As pointed out in the introduction, by the early 1970s, Richard Nixon was able to unify this opposition into what was termed “the silent majority.” One of the questions this study hoped to address was whether crime programs during the 1960s promoted an environment that allowed this new hegemonic consensus to come into being.

The answer to this question is just as ambiguous as many of the messages in 1960s television: yes and no. If one reduces the above question to read, Did the genre alter the political attitudes of its viewers? the answer becomes simpler: It did not, or if it did, these cases were few and isolated, and probably had more to do with the viewer’s individual circumstance and the projection of the program upon those circumstances than the preferred reading of the program. As Fiske (1987) states, “It is wrong to see it [television] as an originator of social change” (p. 45), and social change can lean towards repression as well as progress. At best, television provides a mechanism for negotiating readings that allow for the formation of

alternative meanings. It is on this level that the answer becomes more complicated. One theme that has run consistently throughout this study is that the preferred reading of all these series, except for *The Prisoner*, stressed the need to maintain the institutions of American authority and support the agents who protected those institutions. This preferred message would reinforce the “silent majority’s” commitment to do the same, especially in the face of the subculture’s challenge to those institutions and agents. Further, the ability of a program to allow for an alternative reading could also allow the more adamant members of the “silent majority” to blame the Supreme Court or liberal, “do-gooder” politicians if a Sergeant Friday or a Steve McGarrett was hampered in his investigation by new rules that protected the criminal element. These negotiated readings could also allow the viewer to see the Village in *The Prisoner* as a metaphor for the effects of “big government” programs, of “The Great Society,” on American society and the conflict between Number Six and the various Number Twos, as support for their defense of “liberty” and “the American way.” When discussing factors that “promoted an environment” in any social situation, it becomes obvious that the list can become long. Television programs, including the crime shows, did contribute to promoting an environment in which a new hegemonic consensus could develop. What was the weight of this contribution? Again the answer is ambiguous. People tend to forget

most television programs soon after viewing them; at best their memory lasts through the middle of the next day, after the program is discussed with coworkers. Given this fact, it is difficult to assume that any one program, series, or genre has contributed much to reforming political or social attitudes. However, television is also a socialization tool, supporting the dominant ideology, and constant repetition of a common theme can have an effect on legitimizing and reinforcing political and social attitudes.

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<sup>1</sup> The episode references the American army's involvement in a civilian massacre similar to the one which occurred in My Lai in 1968. Although the My Lai events happened in the late 1960s, the American public was not generally aware of the massacre until 1970. Given this, and the fact that the episode also discussed the draft, which was abolished in 1972, this episode was most probably written was 1971.

<sup>1</sup> In the episode guide for *Hawaii Five-0* featured in Martindale (1991), the author listed this presentation as "Untitled Episode," the only such entry, and only one of three episodes that was "not telecast by network. In fact, it was only after comparing the guest stars in this episode, which Martindale did list, that it could be determined that "To Kill or be Killed" was not broadcast (p. 224).

<sup>2</sup> In the episode guide for *Hawaii Five-0* featured in Martindale (1991), the author listed this presentation as "Untitled Episode," the only such entry, and only one of three episodes that was "not telecast by network. In fact, it was only after comparing the guest stars in this episode, which Martindale did list, that it could be determined that "To Kill or be Killed" was not broadcast (p. 224).

<sup>3</sup> *The Prisoner's* script editor and one of the writers of the first episode of the series, George Markstein, claimed that the initial idea behind the program came from him and not McGoohan. However, this claim may be based upon Markstein's considerable dislike for what he referred to as "McGoohan ego" and be a product of their falling out during the later stages of the production of the series (Rodley, 1984a). McGoohan's version is supported by the other writer of the first episode, David Tomblin (Rodley, 1984b). Regardless of who thought of the original concept for the show, Markstein and McGoohan did differ on the direction of the series. Markstein preferred a more realistic approach to both *mise-en-scene* and plot line. However, McGoohan's vision prevailed and, as one on-line critic asserted, "Had everything been planned and executed in an orderly fashion and kept to the 'strict reality' path which George Markstein had originally intended, then the series might have

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turned out to be just another TV series—well made, quite interesting, but safe and ordinary” (Aftermath, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> This 1962 movie detailed the capture of an American soldier in the Korean War and his subsequent “brain-washing.” The objective of this process was the creation of a political assassin. The movie was recalled after the death of President Kennedy, which added credence to its assertion that the Communists performed “brain-washing.”

<sup>5</sup> Berger (1981) describes the process of paradigmatic analysis as “searching for a hidden pattern of oppositions which generate meaning” (p. 104).



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